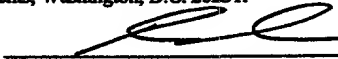


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PLASTIC LENS SYSTEMS, COMPOSITIONS, AND METHODS

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates generally to eyeglass lenses. More particularly, the invention relates to a lens forming composition, system and method for making photochromic, ultraviolet/visible light absorbing, and colored plastic lenses by curing the lens forming composition using activating light.

10 2. Description of the Relevant Art

It is conventional in the art to produce optical lenses by thermal curing techniques from the polymer of diethylene glycol bis(allyl)-carbonate (DEG-BAC). In addition, optical lenses may also be made using ultraviolet ("UV") light curing techniques. See,
15 for example, U.S. Patent Nos. 4,728,469 to Lipscomb et al., 4,879,318 to Lipscomb et al., 5,364,256 to Lipscomb et al., 5,415,816 to Buazza et al., 5,529,728 to Buazza et al., 5,514,214 to Joel et al., 5,516,468 to Lipscomb, et al., 5,529,728 to Buazza et al., 5,689,324 to Lossman et al., and U.S. patent application serial nos. 07/425,371 filed October 26, 1989, 08/439,691 filed May 12, 1995, 08/454,523 filed May 30, 1995,
20 08/453,770 filed May 30, 1995, 08/636,510 filed April 19, 1996, 08/663,703 filed June 14, 1996, 08/666,062 filed June 14, 1996, 08/853,134 filed May 8, 1997, 08/844,557 filed April 18, 1997, 08/904,289 filed July 31, 1997, and 08/959,973 filed October 29, 1997, all of which are hereby specifically incorporated by reference.

25 Curing of a lens by ultraviolet light tends to present certain problems that must be overcome to produce a viable lens. Such problems include yellowing of the lens, cracking of the lens or mold, optical distortions in the lens, and premature release of the lens from the mold. In addition, many of the useful ultraviolet light-curable lens forming compositions exhibit certain characteristics that increase the difficulty of a lens curing

process. For example, due to the relatively rapid nature of ultraviolet light initiated reactions, it is a challenge to provide a composition that is ultraviolet light curable to form an eyeglass lens. Excessive exothermic heat tends to cause defects in the cured lens. To avoid such defects, the level of photoinitiator may be reduced to levels below what is customarily employed in the ultraviolet curing art.

While reducing the level of photoinitiator addresses some problems, it may also cause others. For instance, lowered levels of photoinitiator may cause the material in regions near an edge of the lens and proximate a gasket wall in a mold cavity to incompletely cure due to the presence of oxygen in these regions (oxygen is believed to inhibit curing of many lens forming compositions or materials). Uncured lens forming composition tends to result in lenses with "wet" edges covered by sticky uncured lens forming composition. Furthermore, uncured lens forming composition may migrate to and contaminate the optical surfaces of the lens upon demolding. The contaminated lens is then often unusable.

Uncured lens forming composition has been addressed by a variety of methods (see, e.g., the methods described in U.S. Patent No. 5,529,728 to Buazza et al). Such methods may include removing the gasket and applying either an oxygen barrier or a photoinitiator enriched liquid to the exposed edge of the lens, and then re-irradiating the lens with a dosage of ultraviolet light sufficient to completely dry the edge of the lens prior to demolding. During such irradiation, however, higher than desirable levels of irradiation, or longer than desirable periods of irradiation, may be required. The additional ultraviolet irradiation may in some circumstances cause defects such as yellowing in the lens.

The low photoinitiator levels utilized in many ultraviolet curable lens forming compositions may produce a lens that, while fully-cured as measured by percentage of remaining double bonds, may not possess sufficient cross-link density on the lens surface

to provide desirable dye absorption characteristics during the tinting process.

Various methods of increasing the surface density of such ultraviolet light curable lenses are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,529,728 to Buazza et al. In one method, the lens
5 is demolded and then the surfaces of the lens are exposed directly to ultraviolet light. The relatively short wavelengths (around 254 nm) provided by some ultraviolet light sources (e.g., a mercury vapor lamp) tend to cause the material to cross-link quite rapidly. An undesirable effect of this method, however, is that the lens tends to yellow as a result of such exposure. Further, any contaminants on the surface of the lens that are exposed to
10 short wavelengths of high intensity ultraviolet light may cause tint defects.

Another method involves exposing the lens to relatively high intensity ultraviolet radiation while it is still within a mold cavity formed between glass molds. The glass molds tend to absorb the more effective short wavelengths, while transmitting
15 wavelengths of about 365 nm. This method generally requires long exposure times and often the infrared radiation absorbed by the lens mold assembly will cause premature release of the lens from a mold member. The lens mold assembly may be heated prior to exposure to high intensity ultraviolet light, thereby reducing the amount of radiation necessary to attain a desired level of cross-link density. This method, however, is also
20 associated with a higher rate of premature release.

It is well known in the art that a lens mold/gasket assembly may be heated to cure the lens forming composition from a liquid monomer to a solid polymer. It is also well known that such a lens may be thermally postcured by applying convective heat to the
25 lens after the molds and gaskets have been removed from the lens.

In this application the terms "lens forming material" and "lens forming compositions" are used interchangeably.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An embodiment of an apparatus for preparing an eyeglass lens is described. The apparatus includes a coating unit and a lens curing unit. The coating unit may be
5 configured to coat either mold members or lenses. Preferably, the coating unit is a spin coating unit. The lens curing unit may be configured to direct activating light toward mold members. The mold members are part of a mold assembly that may be placed within the lens curing unit. Depending on the type of lens forming composition used, the apparatus may be used to form photochromic and non-photochromic lenses. The
10 apparatus is preferably configured to allow the operation of both the coating unit and the lens curing unit substantially simultaneously.

The coating unit is preferably a spin coating unit. The spin coating unit preferably comprises a holder for holding an eyeglass lens or a mold member. The holder is
15 preferably coupled to a motor that is preferably configured to rotate the holder. An activating light source may be incorporated into a cover. The cover may be drawn over the body of the lens curing unit, covering the coating units. The activating light source is preferably positioned, when the cover is closed, such that activating light may be applied to the mold member or lens positioned within the coating unit. An activating light source
20 may be an ultraviolet light source, an actinic light source (e.g., a light source producing light having a wavelength between about 380 nm to 490 nm), a visible light source and/or an infra-red light source. Preferably, the activating light source is an ultraviolet light source.

25 The lens curing unit includes at least one, preferably two activating light sources for irradiating a mold assembly. Mold assembly holders may be positionable within the lens forming apparatus such that the activating light may be applied to the mold member during use. A filter is preferably positioned between the mold assemblies and the activating light source. The filter is preferably configured to manipulate the intensity of

activating light that is directed toward the mold members. The filter may be a hazy filter that includes a frosted glass member. Alternatively, the filter may be a liquid crystal display ("LCD") panel.

5 An LCD panel for use as a filter is preferably a monochrome trans-flective panel with the back light and reflector removed. The intensity of the light is preferably reduced as the light passes through the LCD panel. The LCD panel is preferably programmable such that the light transmissibility of the LCD panel may be altered. In use, a
10 predetermined pattern of light and dark regions may be displayed on the LCD panel to alter the intensity of light passing through the panel. One advantage of an LCD panel filter is that a pattern may be altered during a curing cycle. For example, the pattern of light and dark regions may be manipulated such that a lens is initially cured from the center of the lens, then the curing may be gradually expanded to the outer edges of the lens. This type of curing pattern may allow a more uniformly cured lens to be formed.

15 Another advantage is that the LCD panel may be used as a partial shutter to reduce the intensity of light reaching the mold assembly. By blackening the entire LCD panel the amount of light reaching any portion of the mold assembly may be reduced. In this manner, the LCD may be used to create "pulses" of light by alternating between a
20 transmissive and darkened mode.

 In another embodiment, an LCD panel may be used to allow different patterns and/or intensities of light to reach two separate mold assemblies. If the mold assemblies are being used to create lenses having significantly different powers, each mold assembly
25 may require a significantly different light irradiation pattern and/or intensity. The use of an LCD filter may allow the irradiation of each of the mold assemblies to be controlled individually.

 When non-LCD type filters are used, it may be necessary to maintain a library of

filters for use in the production of different types of prescription lenses. Typically, each individual prescription will need a particular filter pattern to obtain a high quality lens. Since an LCD panel is programmable in a variety of patterns, it is believed that one may use a single LCD panel, rather than a library of filters. The LCD panel may be
5 programmed to fit the needs of the specific type of lens being formed.

The LCD panel filters may be coupled to a programmable logic device that may be used to design and store patterns for use during curing. Fig. 7-10 show a number of patterns that may be generated on an LCD panel and used to filter activating light. Each
10 of these patterns is preferably used for the production of a lens having a specific prescription power.

The lens forming apparatus may include a post-cure unit. The post-cure unit is preferably configured to apply heat and activating light to mold assemblies or lenses
15 disposed within the post-cure unit.

The lens forming apparatus may also include a programmable controller configured to substantially simultaneously control the operation of the coating unit, the lens curing unit and the post-cure unit. The apparatus may include a number of light
20 probes and temperature probes disposed within the coating unit, lens curing unit, and the post-cure unit. These probes preferably relay information about the operation of the individual units to the controller. The information relayed may be used to control the operation of the individual units. The operation of each of the units may also be controlled based on the prescription of the lens being formed.

25

The controller may be configured to control various operations of the coating unit. For example, when a spin coating unit is used the controller may control the rotation of the lens or mold member during a coating process (e.g., whether the lens or mold

members are rotated or not and/or the speed of rotation) and the operation of the coating unit lamps (e.g., whether the lamps are on or off and/or the time the lamps are on).

The controller may also be configured to control the various operations of the lens curing unit. Some of the operations that may be controlled or measured by the controller include: (i) measuring the ambient room temperature; (ii) determining the dose of light (or initial dose of light in pulsed curing applications) required to cure the lens forming composition, based on the ambient room temperature; (iii) applying the activating light with an intensity and duration sufficient to equal the determined dose; (iv) measuring the composition's temperature response during and subsequent to the application of the dose of light; (v) calculating the dose required for the next application of activating light (in pulsed curing applications); (vi) applying the activating light with an intensity and duration sufficient to equal the determined second dose; (vii) determining when the curing process is complete by monitoring the temperature response of the lens forming composition during the application of activating light; (viii) turning the upper and lower light sources on and off independently; (ix) monitoring the lamp temperature, and controlling the temperature of the lamps by activating cooling fans proximate the lamps; and (x) turning the fans on/off or controlling the flow rate of an air stream produced by a fan to control the composition temperature;

20

The controller may also be configured to control the operation of the post-cure unit. Some of the operations that may be controlled include control of the operation of the lamps (e.g., whether the lamps are on or off and the time the lamps are on); and operation of the heating device (e.g., whether the heating unit is turned on or off and/or the amount of heat produced by the heating device).

25

Additionally, the controller provides system diagnostics and information to the operator of the apparatus. The controller may notify the user when routine maintenance is due or when a system error is detected. The controller may also manage an interlock

system for safety and energy conservation purposes. The controller may prevent the lamps from operating when the operator may be exposed to light from the lamps.

The controller may also be configured to interact with the operator. The
5 controller preferably includes an input device and a display screen. A number of operations controlled by the controller, as described above, may be dependent on the input of the operator. The controller may prepare a sequence of instructions based on the type of lens (clear, ultraviolet/visible light absorbing, photochromic, colored, etc.), prescription, and type of coatings (e.g., scratch resistant, adhesion promoting, or tint)
10 inputted by an operator.

A variety of lens forming compositions may be cured to form a plastic eyeglass lens in the above described apparatus. Colored lenses, photochromic lenses, and ultraviolet/visible light absorbing colorless lenses may be formed. The lens forming
15 compositions may be formulated such that the conditions for forming the lens (e.g., curing conditions and post cure conditions) may be similar without regard to the lens being formed. In an embodiment, a clear lens may be formed under similar conditions used to form photochromic lenses by adding a colorless, non-photochromic ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compound to the lens forming composition. The curing
20 process for forming a photochromic lens is such that higher doses of activating light than are typically used for the formation of a clear, non-ultraviolet/visible light absorbing lens may be required. In an embodiment, ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds may be added to a lens forming composition to produce a substantially clear lens under the more intense dosing requirements used to form photochromic lenses. The
25 ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds may take the place of the photochromic compounds, making curing at higher doses possible for clear lenses. An advantage of adding the ultraviolet/visible light absorbers to the lens forming composition is that the clear lens formed may offer better protection against ultraviolet/visible light rays than a clear lens formed without such compounds.

5 An embodiment relates to an improved gasket for engaging a mold. The gasket is preferably configured to engage a first mold set for forming a first lens of a first power. The gasket preferably includes at least four discrete projections for spacing mold members of a mold set. The projections are preferably arranged on an interior surface of the gasket. The projections are preferably evenly spaced around the interior surface of the gasket; in a preferred embodiment, the spacing between each projection is about 90 degrees.

10 In another embodiment, an improved gasket includes a fill port for receiving a lens forming composition while fully engaged to a mold set. The fill port preferably extends from an interior surface of the gasket to an exterior surface of the gasket. Consequently, the gasket need not be partially disengaged from a mold member of a mold set in order to receive a lens forming composition.

15 In another embodiment, a mold/gasket assembly for making plastic prescription lenses preferably includes a first mold set for forming a first lens of a first power and a gasket for engaging the first mold set. The first mold set may contain a front mold member and a back mold member. The back mold member is also known as the convex mold member. The back mold member preferably defines the concave surface of a convex lens. The gasket is preferably characterized by at least four discrete projections for spacing the front mold member from the back mold member. A mold cavity for retaining a lens forming composition is preferably at least partially defined by the front mold member, the back mold member, and the gasket. The back mold member preferably has a steep axis and a flat axis. Each of the projections preferably forms an oblique angle with the steep and the flat axis of the mold members. In a preferred embodiment, these angles may each be about 45 degrees. Since the gasket does not include a continuous lip along its interior surface for spacing mold members, as is conventional in the art, the gasket may be configured to engage a large variety of mold

sets. For example, the gasket may be configured to engage a second mold set for forming a second lens of a second power.

In another embodiment, a mold/gasket assembly for making plastic prescription
5 lenses includes a mold set for forming a lens and a gasket configured to engage the mold set. The gasket is preferably characterized by a fill port for receiving a lens forming composition while the gasket is fully engaged to the mold. The fill port preferably extends from an interior surface to an exterior surface of the gasket. The mold set preferably contains at least a front mold member and a back mold member. A mold
10 cavity for retaining a lens forming composition is preferably at least partially defined by the front mold member, the back mold member, and the gasket.

A method for making a plastic eyeglass lens is described. The method preferably includes engaging a gasket with a first mold set for forming a first lens of a first power.
15 The first mold set preferably contains at least a front mold member and a back mold member. A mold cavity for retaining a lens forming composition may be at least partially defined by the front mold member, the back mold member, and the gasket. The gasket is preferably characterized by at least four discrete projections arranged on an interior surface thereof for spacing the front and back mold members. Engaging the gasket with
20 the mold set preferably includes positioning the back mold members such that each of the projections forms an oblique angle with the steep and flat axis of the back mold member. In a preferred embodiment, this angle is about 45 degrees. The method preferably further includes introducing a lens forming composition into the mold cavity and curing the lens forming composition.

25

An additional embodiment provides a method for making a plastic eyeglass lens. The method preferably includes engaging a gasket with a first mold set for forming a first lens of a first power. The first mold set preferably contains at least a front mold member and a back mold member. A mold cavity for retaining a lens forming composition may

be at least partially defined by the front mold member, the back mold member, and the gasket. Preferably, the method further includes introducing a lens forming composition through a fill port, wherein the front and back mold members remain fully engaged with the gasket during the introduction of the lens forming composition. The lens forming composition may then be cured.

In an embodiment, a composition that includes two or more photochromic compounds may further include a light effector composition to produce a lens that exhibits an activated color that differs from an activated color produced by the photochromic compounds without the light effector composition. The activated color is defined as the color a lens achieves when exposed to a photochromic activating light source (e.g., sunlight). A photochromic activating light source is defined as any light source that produces light having a wavelength that causes a photochromic compound to become colored. Photochromic activating light is defined as light that has a wavelength capable of causing a photochromic compound to become colored. The photochromic activating wavelength band is defined as the region of light that has a wavelength that causes coloring of photochromic compounds. The light effector composition may include any compound that exhibits absorbance of at least a portion of the photochromic activating wavelength band. Light effector compositions may include photoinitiators, ultraviolet/visible light absorbers, ultraviolet light stabilizers, and dyes. In this manner, the activated color of a lens may be altered without altering the ratio and or composition of the photochromic compounds. By using a light effector composition, a single lens forming composition may be used as a base solution to which a light effector may be added in order to alter the activated color of the formed lens.

25

The addition of a light effector composition that absorbs photochromic activating light may cause a change in the activated color of the formed lens. The change in activated color may be dependent on the range of photochromic activating light absorbed by the light effector composition. The use of different light effector compositions may

allow an operator to produce photochromic lenses with a wide variety of activated colors (e.g., red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet, gray, or brown).

In an embodiment, an ophthalmic eyeglass lens may be made from an activating
5 light curable lens forming composition comprising a monomer composition and a photoinitiator composition. The monomer composition preferably includes a polyethylenic functional monomer. Preferably, the polyethylenic functional monomer composition includes an aromatic containing polyether polyethylenic functional monomer. In one embodiment, the polyethylenic functional monomer is preferably an
10 ethoxylated bisphenol A di(meth)acrylate.

The monomer composition may include additional monomers to modify the properties of the formed eyeglass lens and/or the lens forming composition. Monomers which may be used in the monomer composition include polyethylenic functional
15 monomers containing groups selected from acrylyl or methacrylyl.

In one embodiment, the photoinitiator composition preferably includes phenyl bis(2,4,6-trimethylbenzoyl) phosphine oxide, commercially available from Ciba Additives in Tarrytown, New York under the trade name of Irgacure 819. In another
20 embodiment, the photoinitiator composition may include a mixture of photoinitiators. Preferably, a mixture of Irgacure 819 and 1-hydroxycyclohexylphenyl ketone, commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 184, is used.

25 In another embodiment, an ophthalmic eyeglass lens may be made from an activating light curable lens forming composition comprising a monomer composition, a photoinitiator composition and a co-initiator composition. An activating light absorbing compound may also be present. An activating light absorbing compound is herein defined as a compound which absorbs at least a portion of the activating light. The

monomer composition preferably includes a polyethylenic functional monomer. Preferably, the polyethylenic functional monomer is an aromatic containing polyether polyethylenic functional monomer. In one embodiment, the polyethylenic functional monomer is preferably an ethoxylated bisphenol A di(meth)acrylate.

5

The co-initiator composition preferably includes amine co-initiators. Preferably, acrylyl amines are included in the co-initiator composition. In one embodiment, the co-initiator composition preferably includes a mixture of CN-384 and CN-386.

10 Examples of activating light absorbing compounds includes photochromic compounds, UV stabilizers, UV absorbers, and/or dyes.

In another embodiment, the controller is preferably configured to run a computer software program which, upon input of the eyeglass prescription, will supply the
15 identification markings of the appropriate front mold, back mold and gasket. The controller may also be configured to store the prescription data and to use the prescription data to determine curing conditions. The controller may be configured to operate the curing unit to produce the appropriate curing conditions.

20 In one embodiment, the lens forming composition may be irradiated with continuous activated light to initiate curing of the lens forming composition. Subsequent to initiating the curing, the lens forming composition may be treated with additional activating light and heat to further cure the lens forming composition.

25 In another embodiment, the lens forming composition may be irradiated with continuous activated light in a heated curing chamber to initiate curing of the lens forming composition. Subsequent to initiating the curing, the lens forming composition may be treated with additional activating light and heat to further cure the lens forming composition.

In another embodiment, an apparatus for preparing an eyeglass lens is described. The apparatus includes a coating unit and a lens curing unit. The coating unit may be configured to coat either mold members or lenses. Preferably, the coating unit is a spin
5 coating unit. The lens curing unit may be configured to substantially simultaneously direct activating light and heat toward mold members. The mold members are part of a mold assembly that may be placed within the lens curing unit. Depending on the type of lens forming composition used, the apparatus may be used to form photochromic and non-photochromic lenses. The apparatus is preferably configured to allow the operation
10 of both the coating unit and the lens curing unit substantially simultaneously. The apparatus is also configured to allow curing, post-cure and anneal processes to be performed in the lens curing unit. The curing or post-cure processes may be performed substantially simultaneously with an anneal process within the lens curing apparatus.

15 In another embodiment, a system for dispensing a heated polymerizable lens forming composition is described. The dispensing system includes a body configured to hold the lens forming composition, a heating system coupled to the body for heating the monomer solution, a conduit coupled to the body for transferring the lens forming composition out of the body, and an elongated member positioned within the conduit for
20 controlling the flow of the lens forming composition through the conduit. The elongated member is positionable within the conduit in a closed position such that flow of the lens forming composition through the conduit is inhibited. The elongated member may also be positioned within the conduit in an open position such that the lens forming composition flows through the conduit. An elastic member is preferably coupled to the
25 elongated member. The elastic member exerts a force on the elongated member that causes the elongated member moves from the closed position positioned to the open position. A movable member is preferably coupled to the conduit and the elongated member. The movable member is preferably configured to control the position of the elongated member.

In another embodiment, a procedure for forming flat-top bifocal lenses is described. Flat-top bifocals include a far vision correction zone and a near vision correction region. The far vision correction zone is the portion of the lens which allows the user to see far away objects more clearly. The near vision correction zone is the region that allows the user to see nearby objects clearer. The near vision correction zone is characterized by a semicircular protrusion which extends out from the outer surface of an eyeglass lens. To reduce the incidence of premature release in flat-top bifocal lenses, it is preferred that polymerization of the lens forming composition in the front portion of the near vision correction zone is initiated before the portion of the lens forming composition in the far vision correction zone proximate the back mold member is substantially gelled. Preferably, this may be achieved by irradiating the front mold with activating light prior to irradiating the back mold with activating light. Alternatively, the incidence of premature release may also be reduced if the front portion of the near vision correction zone is gelled before gelation of the lens forming composition extends from the back mold member to the front mold member.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above brief description as well as further objects, features and advantages of the methods and apparatus of the present invention will be more fully appreciated by reference to the following detailed description of presently preferred but nonetheless illustrative embodiments in accordance with the present invention when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 depicts a perspective view of a plastic lens forming apparatus.

Fig. 2 depicts a perspective view of a spin coating unit.

[illegible]

Fig. 3 depicts a cut-away side view of a spin coating unit.

Fig. 4 depicts a perspective view of a plastic lens forming apparatus with a portion of the body removed.

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Fig. 5 depicts a perspective view of the components of a lens curing unit.

Fig. 6 depicts a perspective view of a plastic lens forming apparatus with a portion of the body removed and the coating units removed.

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Fig. 7-10 depict various LCD filter patterns.

Fig. 11 depicts a mold assembly.

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Fig. 12 depicts a post-cure unit.

Fig. 13 depicts a view of an embodiment of a heat source and a heat distributor.

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Fig. 14 depicts a view of various embodiments of a heat source and heat distributors.

Fig. 15 depicts a view of an embodiment of a heat source and a heat distributor.

Fig. 16 depicts a view of an embodiment of two mold members and a gasket.

25

Fig. 17 depicts a plot of the temperature of the lens forming composition versus time during the application of activating light pulses.

Fig. 18 depicts a schematic diagram of a lens curing apparatus with a light sensor

and controller.

Fig. 19 depicts a view of an embodiment of a system simultaneously employing both a flash light source and a continuous activating (e.g., fluorescent) light source.

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Fig. 20 depicts an embodiment of a system simultaneously employing two flash light sources.

Fig. 21 depicts an embodiment of a system employing an activating light
10 controller.

Fig. 22 depicts a graph illustrating a temperature profile of a continuous radiation cycle.

Fig. 23 depicts a graph illustrating temperature profiles for a continuous
15 irradiation cycle and a pulse irradiation cycle employed with a mold/gasket set having a 3.00D base curve, and while applying cooled air at 58 ° F to the mold/gasket set.

Fig. 24 depicts a chart illustrating qualitative relationships among curing cycle
20 variables.

Fig. 25 depicts a graph illustrating temperature profiles for one curing cycle for a mold/gasket set having a 6.00D base curve and used with three different light levels.

Fig. 26 depicts a graph illustrating continuous and pulsed temperature profiles for
25 a curing cycle employing a mold/gasket set with a 6.00D base curve.

Fig. 27 depicts a graph illustrating continuous and pulsed temperature profiles for a curing cycle employing a mold/gasket set with a 4.50D base curve.

Fig. 28 depicts a graph illustrating continuous and pulsed temperature profiles for a curing cycle employing a mold/gasket set with a 3.00D base curve.

5 Fig. 29 depicts a cross sectional view of a flat-top bifocal mold.

Fig. 30 depicts a plot of % transmittance of light versus wavelength for a photochromic lens.

10 Fig. 31 depicts a plot of % transmittance of light versus wavelength for both a colorless lens containing ultraviolet/visible light absorbers and a lens containing no ultraviolet/visible light absorbers.

15 Fig. 32 depicts an isometric view of an embodiment of a gasket.

Fig. 33 depicts a top view of the gasket of Fig. 1.

Fig. 34 depicts a cross-sectional view of an embodiment of a mold/gasket assembly.

20 Fig. 35 depicts an isometric view of an embodiment of a gasket.

Fig. 36 depicts a top view of the gasket of Fig. 4.

25 Fig. 37 depicts a graph showing the absorption ranges of a variety of photochromic compounds and light effectors.

Fig. 38 depicts a plastic lens forming apparatus which includes two lens curing units.

Fig. 39 depicts chemical structure of acrylated amines.

5 Figs. 40 - 42 depict a front panel of a controller with a display screen depicting various display menus.

Fig. 43 depicts a cross-sectional side view of a heated polymerizable lens forming composition dispensing system.

10 Fig. 44-46 depict cross-sectional side views of a conduit for a heated polymerizable lens forming composition dispensing system.

Fig. 47 depicts a cross-sectional perspective view of a movable member for a heated polymerizable lens forming composition dispensing system.

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Fig. 48 depicts a cross-sectional side view of a movable member for a heated polymerizable lens forming composition dispensing system.

20 Fig. 49 depicts a topographical view of a groove formed in a movable member for a heated polymerizable lens forming composition dispensing system.

Fig. 50 depicts a side view of a heated polymerizable lens forming composition dispensing system mounted on a platform.

25 Fig. 51 depicts a front view of a lens curing unit.

Fig. 52 depicts a top view of a lens curing unit.

Fig. 53 depicts a mold assembly for making flat-top bifocal lenses.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Apparatus, operating procedures, equipment, systems, methods, and compositions for lens curing using activating light are available from Rapid Cast, Inc., Q2100, Inc., and
5 Fast Cast, Inc. in Louisville, Kentucky.

Referring now to Fig. 1, a plastic lens curing apparatus is generally indicated by reference numeral 10. As shown in Fig. 1, lens forming apparatus 10 includes at least one coating unit 20, a lens curing unit 30, a post-cure unit 40, and a controller 50.

10 Preferably, apparatus 10 includes two coating units 20. Coating unit 20 is preferably configured to apply a coating layer to a mold member or a lens. Preferably, coating unit 20 is a spin coating unit. Lens curing unit 30 includes an activating light source for producing activating light. As used herein "activating light" means light that may affect a chemical change. Activating light may include ultraviolet light (e.g., light having a
15 wavelength between about 300 nm to about 400 nm), actinic light, visible light or infrared light. Generally, any wavelength of light capable of affecting a chemical change may be classified as activating. Chemical changes may be manifested in a number of forms. A chemical change may include, but is not limited to, any chemical reaction that causes a polymerization to take place. Preferably the chemical change causes the
20 formation of an initiator species within the lens forming composition, the initiator species being capable of initiating a chemical polymerization reaction. The activating light source is preferably configured to direct light toward a mold assembly. Post-cure unit 40 is preferably configured to complete the polymerization of plastic lenses. Post-cure unit 40 preferably includes an activating light source and a heat source. Controller 50 is
25 preferably a programmable logic controller. Controller 50 is preferably coupled to coating units 20, lens curing unit 30, and post-cure unit 40, such that the controller is capable of substantially simultaneously operating the three units 20, 30, and 40. Controller 50 may be a computer.

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A coating unit for applying a coating composition to a lens or a mold member and then curing the coating composition is described in U.S. Patents 4,895,102 to Kachel et al., 3,494,326 to Upton, and 5,514,214 to Joel et al. (all of which are incorporated herein by reference). In addition, the apparatus shown in Figs. 2 and 3 may also be used to
5 apply coatings to lenses or mold members.

Fig. 2 depicts a pair of spin coating units 102 and 104. These spin coating units may be used to apply a scratch resistant coating or a tint coating to a lens or mold member. Each of the coating units includes an opening through which an operator may
10 apply lenses and lens mold assemblies to a holder 108. Holder 108 is preferably partially surrounded by barrier 114. Barrier 114 is preferably coupled to a dish 115. As shown in Fig. 3, the dish edges may be inclined to form a peripheral sidewall 121 that merges with barrier 114. The bottom 117 of the dish is preferably substantially flat. The flat bottom preferably has a circular opening that allows an elongated member 109 coupled to lens
15 holder 108 to extend through the dish 115.

Holder 108 is preferably coupled to a motor 112 via elongated member 109. Motor 112 is preferably configured to cause rotation of holder 108. In such a case, motor 112 is preferably configured to cause rotation of elongated member 109, that in turn
20 causes the rotation of holder 108. The coating unit 102/104, may also include an electronic controller 140. Electronic controller 140 is preferably coupled to motor 112 to control the rate at which holder 108 is rotated by motor 112. Electronic controller 140 may be coupled to a programmable logic controller, such as controller 50, shown in Fig. 1. The programmable logic controller may send signals to the electronic controller to
25 control the rotational speed of holder 108. Preferably, motor 112 is configured to rotate holder 108 at different rates. Motor 112 is preferably capable of rotating the lens or mold member at a rate of up to 1500 revolutions per minute ("RPM").

In one embodiment, barrier 114 has an interior surface that may be made or lined

with an absorbent material such as foam rubber. Preferably, this absorbent material is disposable and removable. The absorbent material absorbs any liquids that fall off a lens or mold member during use. Alternatively, the interior surface of barrier 114 may be substantially non-absorbent, allowing any liquids used during the coating process to
5 move down barrier 114 into dish 115.

Coating units 20, are preferably positioned in a top portion 12 of lens forming apparatus 10, as depicted in Fig. 1. A cover 22 is preferably coupled to body 14 of the lens forming apparatus to allow top portion 12 to be covered during use. A light source
10 23 is preferably positioned on an inner surface of cover 22. The light source includes at least one lamp 24, preferably two or more lamps, positioned on the inner surface of cover 22. Lamps 24 may be positioned such that the lamps are oriented above the coating units 20 when cover 22 is closed. Lamps 24 preferably emit activating light upon the lenses or mold members positioned within coating units 20. Lamps may have a variety of shapes
15 including, but not limited to, linear (as depicted in Fig. 1), square, rectangular, circular, or oval. Activating light sources preferably emit light having a wavelength that will initiate curing of various coating materials. For example, most currently used coating materials are preferably curable by activating light having wavelengths in the ultraviolet region, therefore the light sources should exhibit strong ultraviolet light emission. The light
20 sources should, preferably, produce minimal heat during use. Thus, lamps 24 will preferably have low heat output. Lamps that exhibit strong ultraviolet light emission have a peak output at a wavelength in the ultraviolet light region, between about 200 nm to about 400 nm, preferably the peak output is between about 200 nm to 300 nm, and more preferably at about 254 nm. In one embodiment, lamps 24 may be lamps that have
25 a peak output in the ultraviolet light region, and have relatively low heat output. Such lights are commonly known as "germicidal" lights and any such light may be used. A "germicidal" light emitting light with a peak output in the desired ultraviolet region is commercially available from Voltarc, Inc. of Fairfield, Connecticut as model UV-WX G10T5.

5 An advantage of using a spin coating unit is that lamps of a variety of shapes may be used (e.g., linear lamps) for the curing of the coating materials. In one embodiment, a coating material is preferably cured in a substantially uniform manner to ensure that the coating is formed uniformly on the mold member or lens. With a spin coating unit, the object to be coated may be spun at speeds high enough to ensure that a substantially uniform distribution of light reaches the object during the curing process, regardless of the shape of the light source. The use of a spin coating unit preferably allows the use of commercially available linear light sources for the curing of coating materials.

10

A switch may be incorporated into cover 22. The switch is preferably electrically coupled to light source 23 such that the switch must be activated prior to turning the light source on. Preferably, the switch is positioned such that closing the cover causes the switch to become activated. In this manner, the lights will preferably remain off until the cover is closed, thus preventing inadvertent exposure of an operator to the light from light source 23.

20 During use a lens or lens mold assembly may be placed on the lens holder 108. The lens holder 108 may include a suction cup connected to a metal bar. The concave surface of the suction cup may be attachable to a face of a mold or lens, and the convex surface of the suction cup may be attached to a metal bar. The metal bar may be coupled to motor 112. The lens holder may also include movable arms and a spring assembly that may be together operable to hold a lens against the lens holder with spring tension during use.

25

As shown in Fig. 4, the curing unit 30 may include an upper light source 214, a lens drawer assembly 216, and a lower light source 218. Lens drawer assembly 216 preferably includes a mold assembly holder 220, more preferably at least two mold assembly holders 220. Each of the mold assembly holders 220 is preferably configured

to hold a pair of mold members that together with a gasket form a mold assembly. The lens drawer assembly 216 is preferably slidably mounted on a guide. During use, mold assemblies may be placed in the mold assembly holders 220 while the lens drawer assembly is in the open position (i.e., when the door extends from the front of the lens curing unit). After the mold assemblies have been loaded into the mold holder 220 the door may be slid into a closed position, with the mold assemblies directly under the upper light source 214 and above the lower light source 218. Vents (not shown) may be placed in communication with the lens curing unit to allow a stream of air to be directed toward the mold members when the mold members are positioned beneath the upper lamps. An exhaust fan (not shown) may communicate with the vents to improve the circulation of air flowing through the lens curing unit.

As shown in Figs. 4 and 5, it is preferred that the upper light source 214 and lower light source 216 include a plurality of activating light generating devices or lamps 240. Preferably, the lamps are oriented proximate each other to form a row of lights, as depicted in Fig. 4. Preferably, three or four lamps are positioned to provide substantially uniform radiation over the entire surface of the mold assembly to be cured. The lamps 240, preferably generate activating light. Lamps 240 may be supported by and electrically connected to suitable fixtures 242. Lamps 240 may generate either ultraviolet light, actinic light, visible light, and/or infrared light. The choice of lamps is preferably based on the monomers used in the lens forming composition. In one embodiment, the activating light may be generated from a fluorescent lamp. The fluorescent lamp preferably has a strong emission spectra in the 380 to 490 nm region. A fluorescent lamp emitting activating light with the described wavelengths is commercially available from Philips as model TLD-15W/03. In another embodiment, the lamps may be ultraviolet lights.

In one embodiment, the activating light sources may be turned on and off quickly between exposures. Flasher ballasts 250, depicted in Fig. 6, may be used for this

function. The flasher ballast may be positioned beneath the coating unit. A flasher ballast 250 may operate in a standby mode wherein a low current is supplied to the lamp filaments to keep the filaments warm and thereby reduce the strike time of the lamp. Such a ballast is commercially available from Magnatek, Inc of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

5 Power supply 252 may also be located proximate the flasher ballasts, underneath the coating unit.

Fig. 18 schematically depicts a light control system. The light sources 214 in lens curing unit 30 apply light towards the mold assembly 352. A light sensor 700 may be located adjacent the light sources 214. Preferably, the light sensor 700 is a photoresistor light sensor (photodiodes or other light sensors may also be usable in this application). The light sensor 700 with a filter 750 may be connected to lamp driver 702 via wires 704. Lamp driver 702 sends a current through the light sensor 700 and receives a return signal from the light sensor 700. The return signal may be compared against an adjustable set point, and then the electrical frequency sent to the light sources 214 via wires 706 may be varied depending on the differences between the set point and the signal received from the light sensor 700. Preferably, the light output is maintained within about +/- 1.0 percent.

20 One "lamp driver" or light controller is a Mercron Model FX0696-4 and Model FX06120-6 (Mercron, Inc., Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.). These light controllers are described in U.S. patents 4,717,863 and 4,937,470.

In an embodiment, a flash lamp emits activating light pulses to cure the lens forming material. It is believed that a flash lamp would provide a smaller, cooler, less expensive, and more reliable light source than other sources. The power supply for a flash lamp tends to draw relatively minimal current while charging its capacitor bank. The flash lamp discharges the stored energy on a microsecond scale to produce very high peak intensities from the flash tube itself. Thus flash lamps tend to require less power for

operation and generate less heat than other light sources used for activating light curing. A flash lamp may also be used to cure a lens coating.

In an embodiment, the flash lamp used to direct activating light toward at least one of the mold members is a xenon light source. The lens coating may also be cured using a xenon light source. Referring to Fig. 21, xenon light source 980 preferably contains photostrobe 992 having a tube 996 and electrodes to allow the transmission of activating light. The tube may include borosilicate glass or quartz. A quartz tube will generally withstand about 3 to 10 times more power than a hard glass tube. The tube may be in the shape of a ring, U, helix, or it may be linear. The tube may include capacitive trigger electrode 995. The capacitive trigger electrode may include a wire, silver strip, or conductive coating located on the exterior of tube 996. The xenon light source is preferably adapted to deliver pulses of light for a duration of less than about 1 second, more preferably between about 1/10 of a second and about 1/1000 of a second, and more preferably still between about 1/400 of a second and 1/600 of a second. The xenon source may be adapted to deliver light pulses about every 4 seconds or less. The relatively high intensity of the xenon lamp and short pulse duration may allow rapid curing of the lens forming composition without imparting significant radiative heat to the composition.

20

In an embodiment, controller 990 (shown in Fig. 21) controls the intensity and duration of activating light pulses delivered from activating light source 980 and the time interval between pulses, shown in Fig. 19. Activating light source 980 may include capacitor 994, that stores the energy required to deliver the pulses of activating light. Capacitor 994 may be adapted to allow pulses of activating light to be delivered as frequently as desired. Temperature monitor 997 may be located at a number of positions within mold chamber 984. The temperature monitor may measure the temperature within the chamber and/or the temperature of air exiting the chamber. The system may be configured to send a signal to cooler 988 and/or distributor 986 (shown in Fig. 19) to vary

the amount and/or temperature of the cooling air. The temperature monitor may also determine the temperature at any of a number of locations proximate the mold cavity and send a signal to controller 990 to vary the pulse duration, pulse intensity, or time between pulses as a function of a temperature within mold chamber 984.

5

In an embodiment, light sensor 999 may be used to determine the intensity of activating light emanating from source 980. The light sensor is preferably configured to send a signal to controller 990, that is preferably configured to maintain the intensity of the activating light at a selected level. Filter 998 may be positioned between activating
10 light source 980 and light sensor 999 and is preferably configured to inhibit non-activating light rays from contacting light sensor 999, while allowing activating rays to contact the sensor. In one embodiment, the filter may include 365 N glass or any other material adapted to filter non-activating light (e.g., visible light) and transmit activating light.

15

In an embodiment, more than one activating light source may be used to simultaneously apply activating pulses to the lens forming composition. Such an embodiment is shown in Fig. 20. Activating light sources 980a and 980b may be positioned around mold chamber 985 so that pulses may be directed toward the front face
20 of a lens and the back face of a lens substantially simultaneously. Mold chamber 985 is preferably adapted to hold a mold in a vertical position such that pulses from activating light source 980a may be applied to the face of a first mold member, while pulses from activating light source 980b may be applied to the face of a second mold member. In an embodiment, activating light source 980b applies activating light pulses to a back surface
25 of a lens more frequently than xenon source 980a applies activating light pulses to a front surface of a lens. Activating light sources 980a and 980b may be configured such that one source applies light to mold chamber 984 from a position above the chamber while the other activating light source applies light to the mold chamber from a position below the chamber.

In an embodiment, a xenon light source and a relatively low intensity (e.g., fluorescent) light source may be used to simultaneously apply activating light to a mold chamber. As illustrated in Fig. 19, xenon source 980 may apply activating light to one side of mold chamber 984 while low intensity fluorescent source 982 applies activating light to another side of the mold chamber. Fluorescent source 982 may include a compact fluorescent "light bucket" or a diffused fluorescent lamp. The fluorescent light source may deliver continuous or substantially pulsed activating light as the xenon source delivers activating light pulses. The fluorescent source may deliver continuous activating light rays having a relatively low intensity of less than about 100 microwatts/cm².

In one embodiment, an upper light filter 254 may be positioned between upper light source 214 and lens drawer assembly 216, as depicted in Fig. 5. A lower light filter 256 may be positioned between lower light source 218 and lens drawer assembly 216. The upper light filter 254 and lower light filter 256 are shown in Fig. 5 as being made of a single filter member, however, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that each of the filters may include two or more filter members. The components of upper light filter 254 and lower light filter 256 are preferably modified depending upon the characteristics of the lens to be molded. For instance, in an embodiment for making negative lenses, the upper light filter 254 includes a plate of Pyrex glass that may be frosted on both sides resting upon a plate of clear Pyrex glass. The lower light filter 256 includes a plate of Pyrex glass, frosted on one side, resting upon a plate of clear Pyrex glass with a device for reducing the intensity of activating light incident upon the center portion relative to the edge portion of the mold assembly.

Conversely, in a preferred arrangement for producing positive lenses, the upper light filter 254 includes a plate of Pyrex glass frosted on one or both sides and a plate of clear Pyrex glass resting upon the plate of frosted Pyrex glass with a device for reducing the intensity of activating light incident upon the edge portion in relation to the center

portion of the mold assembly. The lower light filter 256 includes a plate of clear Pyrex glass frosted on one side resting upon a plate of clear Pyrex glass with a device for reducing the intensity of activating light incident upon the edge portion in relation to the center portion of the mold assembly. In this arrangement, in place of a device for
5 reducing the relative intensity of activating light incident upon the edge portion of the lens, the diameter of the aperture 250 may be reduced to achieve the same result, i.e., to reduce the relative intensity of activating light incident upon the edge portion of the mold assembly.

10 It should be apparent to those skilled in the art that each filter 254 or 256 could be composed of a plurality of filter members or include any other means or device effective to reduce the light to its desired intensity, to diffuse the light and/or to create a light intensity gradient across the mold assemblies. Alternately, in certain embodiments no filter elements may be used.

15 In one embodiment, upper light filter 254 or lower light filter 256 each include at least one plate of Pyrex glass having at least one frosted surface. Also, either or both of the filters may include more than one plate of Pyrex glass each frosted on one or both surfaces, and/or one or more sheets of tracing paper. After passing through frosted Pyrex
20 glass, the activating light is believed to have no sharp intensity discontinuities. By removing the sharp intensity distributions a reduction in optical distortions in the finished lens may be achieved. Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that other means may be used to diffuse the activating light so that it has no sharp intensity discontinuities.

25 In another embodiment, upper light filter 254 and lower light filter 256 may be liquid crystal display ("LCD") panels. Preferably, the LCD panel is a monochrome trans-flective panel with the back light and reflector removed. A monochrome trans-flective LCD panel is manufactured by Sharp Corporation and may be purchased from Earth Computer Products. The LCD panels are preferably positioned such that light from the

light sources passes through the LCD panels to the lens drawer assembly 216. The intensity of the light is preferably reduced as the light passes through the LCD panel. The LCD panel is preferably programmable such that the light transmissibility of the LCD panel may be altered. In use, a predetermined pattern of light and dark regions may be displayed on the LCD panel. As light from the light sources hits these regions the light may be transmitted through the light regions with a higher intensity than through the darker regions. In this manner, the pattern of light and dark areas on the LCD panel may be manipulated such that light having the optimal curing intensity pattern hits the mold assemblies. Although the LCD panel is not entirely opaque in its blackened out state, it may still reduce the intensity of light reaching the mold assemblies. Typically, the light transmission ratio between the lightest and darkest regions of the LCD panel is about 4 to 1.

The use of an LCD panel as a light filter offers a number of advantages over the conventional filter systems described earlier. One advantage is that the filter pattern may be changed actively during a curing cycle. For example, the pattern of light and dark regions may be manipulated such that a lens is initially cured from the center of the lens then the curing may be gradually expanded to the outer edges of the lens. This type of curing pattern may allow a more uniformly cured lens to be formed. In some instances, curing in this manner may also be used to alter the final power of the formed lens.

Another advantage is that the LCD panel may be used as a partial shutter to reduce the intensity of light reaching the mold assembly. By blackening the entire LCD panel the amount of light reaching any portion of the mold assembly may be reduced. In this manner, the LCD may be used to create "pulses" of light by alternating between a transmissive and darkened mode. By having the LCD panel create these light "pulses" a flash ballast or similar pulse generating equipment may be unnecessary. Thus, the light sources may remain on during the entire curing cycle, with the LCD panel creating the curing light pulses. This may also increase the lifetime of the lamps, since the rapid

cycling of lamps tends to reduce the lamps' lifetime.

In another embodiment, an LCD panel may be used to allow different patterns and/or intensities of light to reach two separate mold assemblies. As depicted in Fig. 4, the lens curing unit may be configured to substantially simultaneously irradiate two mold assemblies. If the mold assemblies are being used to create lenses having the same power the light irradiation pattern and/or intensity may be substantially the same for each mold assembly. If the mold assemblies are being used to create lenses having significantly different powers, each mold assembly may require a significantly different light irradiation pattern and/or intensity. The use of an LCD filter may allow the irradiation of each of the mold assemblies to be controlled individually. For example, a first mold assembly may require a pulsed curing scheme, while the other mold assembly may require a continuous irradiation pattern through a patterned filter. The use of an LCD panel may allow such lenses to be formed substantially simultaneously. A first portion of the LCD panel between the light source and the first molding apparatus may be alternatively switched between a darkened and an undarkened state. While a first portion is used to create pulses of activating light, another portion of the LCD panel may be formed into the specific pattern required for the continuous curing of the other lens.

When non-LCD type filters are used it may be necessary to maintain a library of filters for use in the production of different types of prescription lenses. Typically, each individual prescription will need a particular filter pattern to obtain a high quality lens. Since an LCD panel may be programmed into a variety of patterns, it may be possible to rely on a single LCD panel, rather than a library of filters. The LCD panel may be programmed to fit the needs of the specific type of lens being formed. Such a system also minimizes the need for human intervention, since a controller may be programmed for a desired pattern, rather than the operator having to choose among a "library" of filters.

The control of the temperature of an LCD panel filter during a curing cycle may

be important for achieving a proper lens. In general as the temperature of a panel is increased the lighter regions of the panel may become darker (i.e., less light transmissive). Thus, it may be necessary to control the temperature of the LCD panel during curing to ensure that light having the appropriate intensity reaches the mold assemblies. A cooling system or heating system may therefore, be coupled to the LCD panel to ensure proper temperature control. In one embodiment, it is preferred that a substantially transparent heater is attached to the LCD panel. By increasing the temperature of the LCD panel the light transmissibility of the panel may be decreased. It is preferred that an LCD panel be maintained above room temperature since at room temperature the panel may be too light to sufficiently inhibit the light from reaching the mold assemblies. In order to obtain a proper pattern of light and dark regions when the LCD panel is heated it may be necessary to adjust the contrast of the panel. This adjustment may be done either manually or electronically.

The LCD panel filters may be coupled to a programmable logic device that may be used to design and store patterns for use during curing. Fig. 7-10 show a number of patterns which may be generated on an LCD panel and used to filter activating light. Each of these patterns is preferably used for the production of a lens having a specific prescription power.

As shown in Fig. 11, the mold assembly 352 may include opposed mold members 378, separated by an annular gasket 380 to define a lens molding cavity 382. The opposed mold members 378 and the annular gasket 380 may be shaped and selected in a manner to produce a lens having a desired diopter.

The mold members 378 may be formed of any suitable material that will permit the passage of activating light. The mold members 378 are preferably formed of glass. Each mold member 378 has an outer peripheral surface 384 and a pair of opposed surfaces 386 and 388 with the surfaces 386 and 388 being precision ground. Preferably

the mold members 378 have desirable activating light transmission characteristics and both the casting surface 386 and non-casting surface 388 preferably have no surface aberrations, waves, scratches or other defects as these may be reproduced in the finished lens.

5

As noted above, the mold members 378 are preferably adapted to be held in spaced apart relation to define a lens molding cavity 382 between the facing surfaces 386 thereof. The mold members 378 are preferably held in a spaced apart relation by a T-shaped flexible annular gasket 380 that seals the lens molding cavity 382 from the exterior of the mold members 378. In use, the gasket 380 may be supported on a portion of the mold assembly holder 220 (shown in Fig. 4).

In this manner, the upper or back mold member 390 has a convex inner surface 386 while the lower or front mold member 392 has a concave inner surface 386 so that the resulting lens molding cavity 382 is preferably shaped to form a lens with a desired configuration. Thus, by selecting the mold members 378 with a desired surface 386, lenses with different characteristics, such as focal lengths, may be produced.

Rays of activating light emanating from lamps 240 preferably pass through the mold members 378 and act on a lens forming material disposed in the mold cavity 382 in a manner discussed below so as to form a lens. As noted above, the rays of activating light may pass through a suitable filter 254 or 256 before impinging upon the mold assembly 352.

The mold members 378, preferably, are formed from a material that will not transmit activating light having a wavelength below approximately 300 nm. Suitable materials are Schott Crown, S-1 or S-3 glass manufactured and sold by Schott Optical Glass Inc., of Duryea, Pennsylvania or Corning 8092 glass sold by Corning Glass of Corning, New York. A source of flat-top or single vision molds may be Augen Lens Co.

in San Diego, California.

The annular gasket 380 may be formed of vinyl material that exhibits good lip finish and maintains sufficient flexibility at conditions throughout the lens curing process.

- 5 In an embodiment, the annular gasket 380 is formed of silicone rubber material such as GE SE6035 which is commercially available from General Electric. In another preferred embodiment, the annular gasket 380 is formed of copolymers of ethylene and vinyl acetate which are commercially available from E. I. DuPont de Nemours & Co. under the trade name ELVAX7. Preferred ELVAX7 resins are ELVAX7 350 having a melt index
10 of 17.3-20.9 dg/min and a vinyl acetate content of 24.3-25.7 wt. %, ELVAX7 250 having a melt index of 22.0-28.0 dg/min and a vinyl acetate content of 27.2-28.8 wt. %, ELVAX7 240 having a melt index of 38.0-48.0 dg/min and a vinyl acetate content of 27.2-28.8 wt. %, and ELVAX7 150 having a melt index of 38.0-48.0 dg/min and a vinyl acetate content of 32.0-34.0 wt. %. In another embodiment, the gasket may be made
15 from polyethylene. Regardless of the particular material, the gaskets 80 may be prepared by conventional injection molding or compression molding techniques which are well-known by those of ordinary skill in the art.

- In another embodiment, Figs. 32 and 33 present an isometric view and a top
20 view, respectively, of a gasket 510. Gasket 510 may be annular, and is preferably configured to engage a mold set for forming a mold assembly. Gasket 510 is preferably characterized by at least four discrete projections 511. Gasket 510 preferably has an exterior surface 514 and an interior surface 512. The projections 511 are preferably arranged upon inner surface 512 such that they are substantially coplanar. The
25 projections are preferably evenly spaced around the interior surface of the gasket. Preferably, the spacing along the interior surface of the gasket between each projection is about 90 degrees. Although four projections are preferred, it is envisioned that more than four could be incorporated. The gasket 510 may be formed of a silicone rubber material such as GE SE6035 which is commercially available from General Electric. In another

embodiment, the gasket 510 may be formed of copolymers of ethylene and vinyl acetate which are commercially available from E. I. DuPont de Nemours & Co. under the trade name ELVAX7. In another embodiment, the gasket 510 may be formed from polyethylene.

5

As shown in Fig. 34, projections 511 are preferably capable of spacing mold members 526 of a mold set. Mold members 526 may be any of the various types and sizes of mold members that are well known in the art. A mold cavity 528 at least partially defined by mold members 526 and gasket 510, is preferably capable of retaining
10 a lens forming composition. Preferably, the seal between gasket 510 and mold members 526 is as complete as possible. The height of each projection 511 preferably controls the spacing between mold members 526, and thus the thickness of the finished lens. By selecting proper gaskets and mold sets, lens cavities may be created to produce lenses of various powers.

15

A mold assembly consists of two mold members. A front mold member 526a and a back mold member 526b, as depicted in Fig. 34. The back mold member is also known as the convex mold member. The back mold member preferably defines the concave surface of a convex lens. Referring back to Figs. 32 and 33, locations where the steep
20 axis 522 and the flat axis 524 of the back mold member 526b preferably lie in relation to gasket 510 have been indicated. In conventional gaskets, a raised lip may be used to space mold members. The thickness of this lip varies over the circumference of the lip in a manner appropriate with the type of mold set a particular gasket is designed to be used with. In order to have the flexibility to use a certain number of molds, an equivalent
25 amount of conventional gaskets is typically kept in stock.

However, within a class of mold sets there may be points along the outer curvature of a the back mold member where each member of a class of back mold members is shaped similarly. These points may be found at locations along gasket 510,

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T060220 5112260

oblique to the steep and flat axes of the mold members. In a preferred embodiment, these points are at about 45 degree angles to the steep and flat axes of the mold members. By using discrete projections 511 to space the mold members at these points, an individual gasket could be used with a variety of mold sets. Therefore, the number of gaskets that
5 would have to be kept in stock may be greatly reduced.

In addition, gasket 510 may include a recession 518 for receiving a lens forming composition. Lip 520 may be pulled back in order to allow a lens forming composition to be introduced into the cavity. Vent ports 516 may be incorporated to facilitate the
10 escape of air from the mold cavity as a lens forming composition is introduced.

A method for making a plastic eyeglass lenses using gasket 510 is presented. The method preferably includes engaging gasket 510 with a first mold set for forming a first lens of a first power. The first mold set preferably contains at least a front mold member
15 526a and a back mold member 526b. A mold cavity for retaining a lens forming composition may be at least partially defined by mold members 526a and 526b and gasket 510. Gasket 510 is preferably characterized by at least four discrete projections 511 arranged on interior surface 512 for spacing the mold members. Engaging gasket 510 with the mold set preferably includes positioning the mold members such that each
20 of the projections 511 forms an oblique angle with the steep and flat axis of the back mold member 526b. In a preferred embodiment, this angle is about 45 degrees. The method preferably further includes introducing a lens forming composition into mold cavity 528 and curing the lens forming composition. Curing may include exposing the composition to activating light and/or thermal radiation. After the lens is cured, the first
25 mold set may be removed from the gasket and the gasket may then be engaged with a second mold set for forming a second lens of a second power.

Figs. 35 and 36 present an isometric view and a top view, respectively, of an improved gasket. Gasket 530 may be composed of similar materials as gasket 510. Like

gasket 510, gasket 530 is preferably annular, but may be take a variety of shapes. In addition, gasket 530 may incorporate projections 531 in a manner similar to the projections 511 shown in Fig. 32. Alternatively, gasket 530 may include a raised lip along interior surface 532 or another method of spacing mold members that is

5 conventional in the art.

Gasket 530 preferably includes a fill port 538 for receiving a lens forming composition while gasket 530 is fully engaged to a mold set. Fill port 538 preferably extends from interior surface 532 of gasket 530 to an exterior surface 534 of gasket 530.

10 Consequently, gasket 530 need not be partially disengaged from a mold member of a mold set in order to receive a lens forming composition. In order to introduce a lens forming composition into the mold cavity defined by a conventional mold/gasket assembly the gasket must be at least partially disengaged from the mold members. During the process of filling the mold cavity, lens forming composition may drip onto the

15 backside of a mold member. Lens forming composition on the backside of a mold member may cause activating light used to cure the lens to become locally focused, and may cause optical distortions in the final product. Because fill port 538 allows lens forming composition to be introduced into a mold cavity while gasket 530 is fully engaged to a mold set, gasket 530 preferably avoids this problem. In addition, fill port

20 538 may be of sufficient size to allow air to escape during the introduction of a lens forming composition into a mold cavity; however, gasket 530 may also incorporate vent ports 536 to facilitate the escape of air.

A method for making a plastic eyeglass lens using gasket 530 preferably includes

25 engaging gasket 530 with a first mold set for forming a first lens of a first power. The first mold set preferably contains at least a front mold member and a back mold member. A mold cavity for retaining a lens forming composition may be at least partially defined by the front mold member, the back mold member, and the gasket. Preferably, the method further includes introducing a lens forming composition through fill port 538,

wherein the first and second mold members remain fully engaged with the gasket during the introduction of the lens forming composition. The lens forming composition may then be cured by use of activating light and/or thermal radiation.

5 In operation, the apparatus may be appropriately configured for the production of positive lenses which are relatively thick at the center or negative lenses which are relatively thick at the edge. To reduce the likelihood of premature release, the relatively thick portions of a lens are preferably polymerized at a faster rate than the relatively thin portions of a lens.

10

 The rate of polymerization taking place at various portions of a lens may be controlled by varying the relative intensity of activating light incident upon particular portions of a lens. The rate of polymerization taking place at various portions of a lens may also be controlled by directing air across the mold members 378 to cool the mold
15 assembly 352.

 For positive lenses, the intensity of incident activating light is preferably reduced at the edge portion of the lens so that the thicker center portion of the lens polymerizes faster than the thinner edge portion of the lens. Conversely, for a negative lens, the
20 intensity of incident activating light is preferably reduced at the center portion of the lens so that the thicker edge portion of the lens polymerizes faster than the thinner center portion of the lens. For either a positive lens or a negative lens, air may be directed across the faces of the mold members 378 to cool the mold assembly 352. As the overall intensity of incident activating light is increased, more cooling is needed which may be
25 accomplished by either or both of increasing the velocity of the air and reducing the temperature of the air.

 It is well known by those of ordinary skill in the art that lens forming materials tend to shrink as they cure. If the relatively thin portion of a lens is allowed to

polymerize before the relatively thick portion, the relatively thin portion will tend to be rigid at the time the relatively thick portion cures and shrinks and the lens will either release prematurely from or crack the mold members. Accordingly, when the relative intensity of activating light incident upon the edge portion of a positive lens is reduced
5 relative to the center portion, the center portion may polymerize faster and shrink before the edge portion is rigid so that the shrinkage is more uniform. Conversely, when the relative intensity of activating light incident upon the center portion of a negative lens is reduced relative to the edge portion, the edge portion may polymerize faster and shrink before the center becomes rigid so that the shrinkage is more uniform.

10

The variation of the relative intensity of activating light incident upon a lens may be accomplished in a variety of ways. According to one method, in the case of a positive lens, a ring of opaque material may be placed between the lamps and the mold assembly so that the incident activating light falls mainly on the thicker center portion of the lens.
15 Alternatively, when an LCD panel is used as the filter, the panel may be programmed to form a pattern so that the incident activating light falls mainly on the thicker center portion of the lens (See Fig. 7, patterns A, B, C, D, F, H, and I). Conversely, for a negative lens, a disk of opaque material may be placed between the lamps 240 and the mold assembly 352 so that the incident activating light falls mainly on the edge portion of
20 the lens. Alternatively, when an LCD panel is used as the filter, the panel may be programmed to form a pattern so that the incident activating light falls mainly on the thicker edge portion of the lens (See Fig. 9, patterns C, F, I, and Fig. 10, patterns A, B, D, E, G, and H).

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According to another method, in the case of a negative lens, a sheet material or an LCD panel having a pattern with a variable degree of opacity ranging from opaque at a central portion to transparent at a radial outer portion may be disposed between the lamps 240 and the mold assembly 352. Conversely, for a positive lens, a sheet material or LCD panel having a pattern with a variable degree of opacity ranging from transparent at a

central portion to opaque at a radial outer portion may be disposed between the lamps 240 and the mold assembly 352.

As noted above, the mold assembly 352 may be cooled during curing of the lens forming material as the overall intensity of the incident activating light is increased. Cooling of the mold assembly 352 generally reduces the likelihood of premature release by slowing the reaction and improving adhesion. There may also be improvements in the optical quality, stress characteristics and impact resistance of the lens. Cooling of the mold assembly 352 is preferably accomplished by blowing air across the mold assembly 352. The air preferably has a temperature ranging between 15 and 85°F (about -9.4°C to 29.4°C) to allow for a curing time of between 30 and 10 minutes. The air distribution devices have been found to be particularly advantageous as they may be specifically designed to direct air directly across the surface of the opposed mold members 378. After passing across the surface of the opposed mold members 378, the air emanating from the air distribution devices may be vented out of the system. Alternately the air emanating from the air distribution devices may be recycled back to an air cooler. In another embodiment, the mold assembly 352 may also be cooled by disposing the mold assembly in a liquid cooling bath.

The opposed mold members 378 are preferably thoroughly cleaned between each curing run as any dirt or other impurity on the mold members 378 may cause premature release. The mold members 378 may be cleaned by any conventional means well known to those of ordinary skill in the art such as with a domestic cleaning product, i.e., Mr. Clean™ available from Proctor and Gamble. Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize, however, that many other techniques may also be used for cleaning the mold members 378.

After curing of the lens in lens curing unit 30, the lens may be de-molded and post-cured in the post-cure unit 40. Post-cure unit 40 is preferably configured to apply

light, heat or a combination of light and heat to the lens. As shown in Fig. 12, post-cure unit 40 may include a light source 414, a lens drawer assembly 416, and a heat source 418. Lens drawer assembly 416 preferably includes a lens holder 420, more preferably at least two lens holders 420. Lens drawer assembly 416 is preferably slidingly mounted on a guide. Preferably, lens drawer assembly 416 is made from a ceramic material. Cured lenses may be placed in lens holders 420 while the lens drawer assembly 416 is in the open position (i.e., when the door extends from the front of post-cure unit 40). After the lenses have been loaded into lens holders 420 the door may be slid into a closed position, with the lenses directly under light source 414 and above heat source 418.

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As shown in Fig. 12, it is preferred that the light source 414 includes a plurality of light generating devices or lamps 440. Preferably, lamps 440 may be oriented above each of the lens holders when the lens drawer assembly is closed. The lamps 440, preferably, generate activating light. The lamps 440 may be supported by and electrically connected to suitable fixtures 442. The fixtures may be at least partially reflective and concave in shape to direct light from the lamps 440 toward the lens holders. The lamps may generate either ultraviolet light, actinic light, visible light, and/or infrared light. The choice of lamps is preferably based on the monomers used in the lens forming composition. In one embodiment, the activating light may be generated from a fluorescent lamp. The fluorescent lamp preferably has a strong emission spectra from about 200 nm to about 800 nm, more preferably between about 200 nm to about 400 nm. A fluorescent lamp emitting activating light with the described wavelengths is commercially available from Voltarc as model SNEUV RPR 4190. In another embodiment, the lamp may generate ultraviolet light.

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In one embodiment, the activating light source may be turned on and off quickly between exposures. A flasher ballast may be used for this function. The flasher ballast may be positioned beneath the post-cure unit. A flasher ballast may operate in a standby mode wherein a low current is preferably supplied to the lamp filaments to keep the

filaments warm and thereby reduce the strike time of the lamp. Such a ballast is commercially available from Magnatek, Inc of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Heat source 418 may be configured to heat the interior of the post-cure unit.

5 Preferably, heat source 418 is a resistive heater. Heat source 418 may be made up of one or two resistive heaters. The temperature of heat source 418 may be thermostatically controlled. By heating the interior of the post-cure unit the lenses which are placed in post-cure unit 40 may be heated to complete curing of the lens forming material. Post-cure unit 40 may also include a fan to circulate air within the unit. The circulation of air
10 within the unit may help maintain a relatively uniform temperature within the unit. The fan may also be used to cool the temperature of post-cure unit 40 after completion of the post cure process.

In an embodiment, described as follows, a lens cured by exposure to activating
15 light may be further processed by conductive heating. Such conductive heating tends to enhance the degree of cross-linking in the lens and to increase the tintability of the lens. A lens forming material is preferably placed in mold cavity 900 (illustrated in Fig. 16), which is defined by at least first mold member 902 and second mold member 904. Activating light is directed toward at least one of the mold members, thereby curing the
20 lens forming material to a lens. Heat distributor 910 (shown in Fig. 13) may be adapted to distribute conductive heat from conductive heat source 418 to at least one mold member. Heat distributor 910 is preferably flexible such that at least a portion of it may be shaped to substantially conform to the shape of face 906 or face 907 of first mold member 902 or second mold member 904, respectively. Heat distributor 910 is
25 preferably placed in contact with conductive heat source 418, and mold member 902 is preferably placed on heat distributor 910 such that face 906 of the mold member rests on top of the heat distributor 910. Heat distributor 910 may be coupled to heat source 418. Heat is preferably conductively applied to the heat distributor 910 by the heat source 418. Heat is preferably conducted from the heat distributor 910 through the mold member to a

face of the lens. The heat distributor may be shaped to accommodate face 906 of first mold member 902 or face 907 of second mold member 904 such that the heat is applied to front face 916 or back face 915 of the lens. The temperature of heat source 418 may be thermostatically controlled.

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In an embodiment, a resistive heater 418 (shown in Fig. 17) may be used as a heat source to provide conductive heat to the lens. A number of other heat sources may be used. In an embodiment, heat distributor 910 may include countershape 920.

Countershape 920 may be placed on top of the hot plate to distribute conductive heat from the hot plate. The countershape is preferably flexible such that at least a portion of it may substantially conform to the shape of an outside face of a mold member. The countershape may be hemispherical and either convex or concave depending upon whether the surface of the mold assembly to be placed upon it is convex or concave. For example, when the concave surface of the back mold is utilized to conduct heat into the lens assembly, a convex countershape is preferably provided to rest the assembly on.

Countershape 920 may include a glass mold, a metal optical lap, a pile of hot salt and/or sand, or any of a number of other devices adapted to conduct heat from heat source 912. It should be understood that Figure 17 includes combinations of a number of embodiments for illustrative purposes. Any number of identical or distinct countershapes may be used in combination on top of a heat source. In an embodiment, a countershape includes a container 922 filled with particles 924. The particles preferably include metal or ceramic material. Countershape 920 may include heat distributor 910. A layer 914 of material may be placed over the countershape 920 or heat distributor 910 to provide slow, smooth, uniform heat conduction into the lens mold assembly. This layer preferably has a relatively low heat conductivity and may be made of rubber, cloth, NomexTM fabric or any other suitable material that provides slow, smooth, uniform conduction.

In an embodiment, countershape 920 includes layer 914 (e.g., a bag or container)

filled with particles 924 such that the countershape may be conveniently shaped to conform to the shape of face 906 or face 907. In an embodiment, the countershape is preferably a "beanbag" that contains particles 924 and may be conformable to the shape of a mold face placed on top of it. Particles 924 may include ceramic material, metal material, glass beads, sand and/or salt. The particles preferably facilitate conductive heat to be applied to face 906 or face 907 substantially evenly.

In an embodiment, the countershape 920 is preferably placed on top of heat source 418. Countershape 920 is preferably heated until the temperature of the countershape is substantially near or equal to the temperature of the surface of the heat source. The countershape may then be "flipped over" such that the heated portion of the countershape that has a temperature substantially near or equal to that of the surface of the heat source is exposed. A mold may be placed on top of the heated portion of the countershape, and the countershape is preferably conformed to the shape of the face of the mold. In this manner, the rate of conductive heat transfer to the lens may begin at a maximum. Heat is preferably conductively transferred through the countershape and the mold face to a face of the lens. The temperature of the heated portion of the countershape may tend to decrease after the mold is placed onto the countershape.

In an embodiment, heat distributor 910 may partially insulate a mold member from conductive heat source 418. The heat distributor preferably allows a gradual, uniform transfer of heat to the mold member. The heat distributor is preferably made of rubber and/or another suitable material. The heat distributor may include countershapes of various shapes (e.g., hemispherically concave or convex) and sizes that may be adapted to contact and receive mold members.

In an embodiment, heat may be conductively applied by the heat source to only one outside face of one mold member. This outside face may be face 906 or face 907. Heat may be applied to the back face of the lens to enhance crosslinking and/or tintability

of the lens material proximate to the surface of the back face of the lens.

In a preferred embodiment, a thermostatically controlled hot plate 418 is preferably used as a heat source. Glass optical mold 928 is preferably placed convex side up on hot plate 418 to serve as a countershape. The glass optical mold preferably has about an 80 mm diameter and a radius of curvature of about 93mm. Rubber disc 929 may be placed over this mold 928 to provide uniform conductive heat to the lens mold assembly. The rubber disc is preferably made of silicone and preferably has a diameter of approximately 74 mm and a thickness of about 3 mm. The lens mold assembly is preferably placed on mold 928 so that outside face 906 of a mold member of the assembly rests on top of mold 928. It is preferred that the edge of the lens mold assembly not directly contact the hot plate. The lens mold assembly preferably receives heat through the rubber disc and not through its mold edges.

To achieve good yield rates and reduce the incidence of premature release while using the conductive heat method, it may be necessary for the edge of the lens to be completely cured and dry before conductive heat is applied. If the lens edge is incompletely cured (i.e., liquid or gel is still present) while conductive heat is applied, there may be a high incidence of premature release of the lens from the heating unit.

In an embodiment, the edges of a lens may be treated to cure or remove incompletely cured lens forming material (see above description) before conductive heat is applied. The mold cavity may be defined by at least gasket 908, first mold member 902, and second mold member 904. Activating light rays may be directed toward at least one of the mold members, thereby curing the lens forming material to a lens preferably having front face 916, a back face 915, and edges. Upon the formation of the lens, the gasket may be removed from the mold assembly. An oxygen barrier may be used to cure any remaining liquid or gel on the lens edge as described in more detail below. An oxygen barrier treated with photoinitiator is preferably employed. Alternatively, any

remaining liquid or gel may be removed manually. Once the edge of the lens is dry, a face of the lens may be conductively heated using any of the methods described herein.

In an embodiment, a lens may be tinted after receiving conductive heat postcure treatment in a mold cavity. During tinting of the lens, the lens is preferably immersed in a dye solution.

The operation of the lens curing system may be controlled by a microprocessor based controller 50 (Fig. 1). Controller 50 preferably controls the operation of coating unit 20, lens curing unit 30, and post-cure unit 40. Controller 50 may be configured to substantially simultaneously control each of these units. In addition, the controller may include a display 52 and an input device 54. The display and input device may be configured to exchange information with an operator.

Controller 50 preferably controls a number of operations related to the process of forming a plastic lens. Many of the operations used to make a plastic lens (e.g., coating, curing and post-cure operations) are preferably performed under a predetermined set of conditions based on the prescription and type of lens being formed (e.g., ultraviolet/visible light absorbing, photochromic, colored, etc.). Controller 50 is preferably programmed to control a number of these operations, thus relieving the operator from having to continually monitor the apparatus.

In some embodiments, the lens or mold members may be coated with a variety of coatings (e.g., a scratch resistant or tinted coating). The application of these coatings may require specific conditions depending on the type of coating to be applied. Controller 50 is preferably configured to produce these conditions in response to input from the operator.

When a spin coating unit is used, controller 50 may be configured to control the

rotation of the lens or mold member during the coating process. Controller 50 is preferably electronically coupled to the motor of the spin coating unit. The controller may send electronic signals to the motor to turn the motor on and/or off. In a typical coating process the rate at which the mold or lens is rotated is preferably controlled to achieve a uniform and defect free coating. The controller is preferably configured to control the rate of rotation of the mold or lens during a curing process. For example, when a coating material is being applied, the mold or lens is preferably spun at relatively high rotational rates (e.g., about 900 to about 950 RPM). When the coating material is being cured, however, a much slower rotational rate is preferably used (e.g., about 200 RPM). The controller is preferably configured to adjust the rotational rate of the lens or mold depending on the process step being performed.

The controller is also preferably configured to control the operation of lamps 24. The lamps are preferably turned on and off at the appropriate times during a coating procedure. For example, during the application of the coating material activating lights are typically not used, thus the controller may be configured to keep the lamps off during this process. During the curing process, activating light may be used to initiate the curing of the coating material. The controller is preferably configured to turn the lamps on and to control the amount of time the lamps remain on during a curing of the coating material. The controller may also be configured to create light pulses to affect curing of the coating material. Both the length and frequency of the light pulses may be controlled by the controller.

The controller is also preferably configured to control operation of the lens-curing unit. The controller may perform some and/or all of a number of functions during the lens curing process, including, but not limited to: (i) measuring the ambient room temperature; (ii) determining the dose of light (or initial dose of light in pulsed curing applications) required to cure the lens forming composition, based on the ambient room temperature; (iii) applying the activating light with an intensity and duration sufficient to

equal the determined dose; (iv) measuring the composition's temperature response during and subsequent to the application of the dose of light; (v) calculating the dose required for the next application of activating light (in pulsed curing applications); (vi) applying the activating light with an intensity and duration sufficient to equal the determined second
5 dose; (vii) determining when the curing process is complete by monitoring the temperature response of the lens forming composition during the application of activating light; (viii) turning the upper and lower light sources on and off independently; (ix) monitoring the lamp temperature, and controlling the temperature of the lamps by activating cooling fans proximate the lamps; and (x) turning the fans on/off or controlling
10 the flow rate of an air stream produced by a fan to control the composition temperature. Herein, "dose" refers to the amount of light energy applied to an object, the energy of the incident light being determined by the intensity and duration of the light.

A temperature monitor may be located at a number of positions within the lens
15 curing unit 30. In one embodiment an infra-red temperature sensor may be located such that it may measure the temperature of the mold and/or the lens forming composition in the mold cavity. One infra-red temperature sensor may be the Cole-Parmer Model E39669-00 (Vernon Hills, Illinois).

20 The temperature monitor may measure the temperature within the chamber and/or the temperature of air exiting the chamber. The controller may be configured to send a signal to a cooler and/or distributor to vary the amount and/or temperature of the cooling air. The temperature monitor may also determine the temperature at any of a number of locations proximate the mold cavity. The temperature monitor preferably
25 sends a signal to the controller such that the temperature of the mold cavity and/or the lens forming composition may be relayed to the controller throughout the curing process.

During the initial set-up of a curing process the temperature of the lens forming composition within the mold cavity may be determined. This initial temperature of the

lens forming composition may be about equal to the ambient room temperature. The controller may then determine the initial temperature of the lens forming composition by measuring the ambient room temperature. Alternatively, the initial temperature of the lens forming composition may be measured directly using the aforementioned
5 temperature sensors.

The controller preferably determines the initial dose to be given to the lens forming composition based on the initial temperature of the composition. The controller may use a table to determine the initial dose, the table including a series of values
10 correlating the initial temperature to the initial dose and/or the mass of the lens forming composition. The table may be prepared by routine experimentation. To prepare the table a specific lens forming composition of a specific mass is preferably treated with a known dose of activating light. The mold cavity is preferably disassembled and the gelation pattern of the lens forming composition observed. This procedure may be
15 repeated, increasing or decreasing the dosage as dictated by the gelation patterns, until the optimal dosage is determined for the specific lens forming composition.

During this testing procedure the initial temperature of the lens forming composition may be determined, this temperature being herein referred to as the "testing
20 temperature". In this manner, the optimal dose for the lens forming composition at the testing temperature may be determined. When the lens forming material has an initial temperature that is substantially equal to the testing temperature, the initial dosage may be substantially equal to the experimentally determined dosage. When the lens forming material has a temperature that is substantially greater or less than the testing temperature,
25 the initial dose may be calculated based on a function of the experimentally determined initial dose. In single dose applications the initial dose of activating light will be sufficient to substantially cure the plastic lens. For multi-pulse applications, the initial dose will be followed by additional light doses.

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In an embodiment, the controller is preferably adapted to control the intensity and duration of activating light pulses delivered from the activating light source and the time interval between the pulses. The activating light source may include a capacitor which stores the energy required to deliver the pulses of activating light. The capacitor
5 may allow pulses of activating light to be delivered as frequently as desired. A light sensor may be used to determine the intensity of activating light emanating from the source. The light sensor is preferably adapted to send a signal to the controller, which is preferably adapted to maintain the intensity of the activating light at a selected level. A filter may be positioned between the activating light source and the light sensor and is
10 preferably adapted to inhibit a portion of the activating light rays from contacting the light sensor. This filter may be necessary to keep the intensity of the activating light upon the light sensor within the detectable range of the light sensor.

In an embodiment, a shutter system may be used to control the application of
15 activating light rays to the lens forming material. The shutter system preferably includes air-actuated shutter plates that may be inserted into the curing chamber to prevent activating light from reaching the lens forming material. The shutter system may be coupled to the controller, which may actuate an air cylinder to cause the shutter plates to be inserted or extracted from the curing chamber. The controller preferably allows the
20 insertion and extraction of the shutter plates at specified time intervals. The controller may receive signals from temperature sensors allowing the time intervals in which the shutters are inserted and/or extracted to be adjusted as a function of a temperature of the lens forming composition and/or the molds. The temperature sensor may be located at numerous positions proximate the mold cavity and/or casting chamber.

25

Alternatively, the shutter system may include an LCD filter that may be darkened to inhibit the activating light from reaching the lens forming material. The controller is preferably configured to darken the LCD panel at specified time intervals. The controller may receive signals from temperature sensors allowing the time intervals

in which the LCD panel is darkened to be adjusted as a function of a temperature of the lens forming composition and/or the molds.

In an embodiment, a single dose of activating light may be used to cure a lens forming composition. The controller may monitor the change in temperature of the lens forming composition during the application of activating light. The activating light preferably initiates a polymerization reaction such that the temperature of the lens forming composition begins to rise. By monitoring the change in temperature over a time period the controller may determine the rate of temperature change. The controller preferably controls the polymerization of the lens forming composition based on the rate of temperature change. When the temperature is found to be rising at a faster than desired rate, the desired rate being determined based on previous experiments, the temperature controller may alter the intensity and/or the duration of the pulse such that the rate of temperature change is lowered. The duration of the activating light may be shortened and/or the intensity of the activating light may be diminished to achieve this effect. The controller may also increase the rate of cooling air blowing across the mold to help lower the temperature of the lens forming composition. Alternatively, if the temperature of the reaction is increasing too slowly, the controller may increase the intensity of the activating light and/or increase the duration of the pulse. Additionally, the controller may decrease the rate of cooling air blowing across the mold to allow the temperature of the lens forming composition to rise at a faster rate.

One manner in which the temperature may be controlled is by monitoring the temperature during the application of activating light, as described in U.S. Patent No. 5,422,046 to Tarshiani, et al. During activating light irradiation, the temperature of the lens forming composition tends to rise. When the temperature reaches a predetermined upper set point the activating light source is preferably turned off. Removal of the activating energy may allow the temperature to gradually begin to fall. When the temperature is reduced to a predetermined lower set point the activating light source is

preferably turned on. In this manner, the temperature may be controlled within a desired range. This temperature range tends to be very broad due to the nature of the lens forming polymerization reactions. For example, turning the activating light off at a predetermined upper set point may not insure that the temperature of the lens forming composition will stop at that point. In fact, it is more likely that the temperature may continue to rise after the upper set point has been reached. To offset this effect the upper set point may be set at a temperature lower than the upper temperature desired during the lens forming process. Such a method of temperature control may be insufficient to control the temperature. As shown in Fig. 17, increase in the temperature of a lens forming composition during the lens forming process may not be constant. Since the increase in temperature of the composition changes as the process continues, the use of an upper set point for controlling the temperature may not adequately prevent the composition from reaching greater than desired temperatures. Additionally, near the completion of the process the upper set point may be set too low, thereby preventing the lens forming composition from reaching a temperature that is adequate to maintain the polymerization reaction due to insufficient doses of activating light.

In an embodiment the temperature control process may be described as a modified Proportional-Integral-Derivative ("PID") control method. Preferably, the controller is configured to operate the lens-curing system using a PID control method. The controller may use a number of factors to determine the dose of activating light applied for each pulse. The controller preferably measures the temperature as well as the rate of temperature change.

The PID control method involves the combination of proportional, integral and derivative controlling methods. The first, proportional control, may be achieved by mixing two control factors in such a way as to achieve the desired effect. For lens control the two factors which tend to have the most effect on temperature control may be the dosage of activating light and the flow rate of the cooling air. These two factors may be

altered to achieve a desired temperature response. If the temperature must be raised as rapidly as possible a full dosage of light may delivered with no cooling air present. Similarly, if the composition must be rapidly cooled the sample may be treated with cooling air only. Preferably the two factors, application of incident light and cooling, are preferably both applied to achieve the desired temperature response. The mixture, or proportions of these factors may allow the temperature of the composition to be controlled.

The use of proportional control tends to ignore other effects that influence the temperature of the lens forming composition. During the lens forming process, the temperature of the lens forming composition may vary due to the rate of polymerization of the reaction.. When the composition is undergoing a rapid rate of polymerization, the temperature of the composition may rise beyond that determined by the proportional setting of the activating light and cooling air controls. Toward the end of the process the lens may become too cool due to the a reduction in the rate of polymerization of the composition. The use of proportional control may therefore be inadequate to control this procedure and may lead to greater than desired variations in the temperature of the composition.

These limitations may be overcome by altering the proportions of the two components in response to the temperature of the composition. A single set point may be used to control the temperature of a reaction. As the temperature rises above this set point the proportion of the activating light and cooling may be adjusted such that the temperature begins to lower back toward the set point. If the temperature drops below the set point the proportion of activating light and cooling may be adjusted to raise the temperature back to the set point. Typically, to lower the temperature the dose of activating light may be reduced and/or the flow rate of the cooling air may be increased. To raise the temperature the dose of activating light may be increased and/or the flow rate of the cooling air may be decreased.

5 The use of proportional control in this manner may not lead to a steady temperature. Depending on the set point and the response time of the lens forming composition to variations in the dosage of light and/or cooling air, the temperature may oscillate over the set point, never attaining a steady value. To better control such a system the rate of change of the temperature over a predetermined time period is preferably monitored. As the temperature rises the rate at which the temperature rises is preferably noted. Based on this rate of change the controller may then alter the dosage of activating light and/or cooling air such that a temperature much closer to the set point
10 may be achieved. Since the rate will change in response to changes in the rate of polymerization, such a system may better control the temperature of the lens forming composition throughout the process.

15 In an embodiment, the controller may be a modified PID controller or a computer programmed to control the lens curing unit using a PID control scheme. The controller preferably monitors the temperature of the lens forming composition throughout the process. Additionally, the controller may monitor the rate of change of temperature throughout the reaction. When a plurality of pulses are being applied to control the polymerization, the controller preferably controls the duration and intensity of each pulse
20 to control the temperature of the composition. In a typical process the rate of change in temperature is preferably monitored after the application of an activating light pulse. If the temperature is trending in an upward direction, the controller preferably waits for the temperature to crest and start descending, before the application of additional light pulses. This cresting temperature may vary, as depicted in Fig. 17, throughout the lens forming
25 process. After the temperature has passed a predetermined set point, a dose, calculated from the rate of change in temperature caused by the application of the previous pulse, may be applied to the lens forming composition. After the light pulse is delivered the controller may repeat the procedure additional times.

When the reaction nears completion the controller detects the lack of response to the last exposure (i.e. the lens temperature did not increase appreciably). At this point the controller may apply a final dose to assure a substantially complete cure and notify the operator that the mold assembly is ready to be removed from the chamber.

5

One method of controlling the dose of light reaching the lens may be through the use of filters, as described above. In one embodiment, an LCD filter system may be used to adjust the intensity of incoming light. The LCD system is preferably coupled to the controller such that a pattern displayed by the LCD system may be altered by the
10 controller. The controller preferably configures the pattern of light and dark areas on the LCD panel such that light having the optimal curing intensity pattern hits the mold assemblies. The pattern that is produced is preferably based on the prescription and type of lens being produced.

15 In another embodiment, the controller may actively change the pattern on the LCD panel during a curing cycle. For example, the pattern of light and dark regions may be manipulated such that the lens is cured from the center of the lens then gradually expanded to the outer edges of the lens. This type of curing pattern may allow a more uniformly cured lens to be formed. In some instances, curing in this manner may also be
20 used to alter the final power of the formed lens.

In another embodiment, the LCD panel may be used as a partial shutter to reduce the intensity of light reaching the lens assembly. By blackening the entire LCD panel the amount of light reaching any portion of the mold assembly may be reduced. The
25 controller may be configured to cause the LCD panel to create "pulses" of light by alternating between a transmissive and darkened mode. By having the LCD panel create these light "pulses" the need for a flash ballast or similar pulse generating equipment may be unnecessary. Thus the use of a controller and an LCD panel may simplify the system.

In some embodiments, the lens may require a post-curing process. The post-cure process may require specific conditions depending on the type of lens being formed. The controller is preferably configured to produce these conditions in response to input from the operator.

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The controller is preferably configured to control the operation of lamps 440 (See Fig. 12). The lamps are preferably turned on and off at the appropriate times during the post-cure procedure. For example, in some post-cure operations the lights may not be required, thus the controller would keep the lights off during this process. During other processes, the lights may be used to complete the curing of the lens. The controller is preferably configured to turn the lights on and to control the amount of time the lights remain on during a post-cure procedure. The controller may also be configured to create light pulses during the post-cure procedure. Both the length and frequency of the light pulses may be controlled by the controller.

15

The controller is preferably configured to control operation of the heating device 418 during the post-cure operation. Heating device 418 is preferably turned on and off to maintain a predetermined temperature within the post-cure unit. Alternatively, when a resistive heater is used, the current flow through the heating element may be altered to control the temperature within the post-cure unit. Preferably both the application of light and heat are controlled by the controller. The operation of fans, coupled to the post-cure unit, is also preferably controlled by the controller. The fans may be operated by the controller to circulate air within or into/out of the post-cure unit.

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Additionally, the controller may provide system diagnostics to determine if the system is operating properly. The controller may notify the user when routine maintenance is due or when a system error is detected. For example, the controller may monitor the current passing through lamps of the coating, lens curing, or post-cure unit to determine if the lamps are operating properly. The controller may keep track of the

number of hours that the lamps have been used. When a lamp has been used for a predetermined number of hours a message may be transmitted to an operator to inform the operator that the lamps may require changing. The controller may also monitor the intensity of light produced by the lamp. A photodiode may be placed proximate the lamps to determine the intensity of light being produced by the lamp. If the intensity of light falls outside a predetermined range, the current applied to the lamp may be adjusted to alter the intensity of light produced (either increased to increase the intensity; or decreased to decrease the intensity). Alternatively, the controller may transmit a message informing the operator that a lamp needs to be changed when the intensity of light produced by the lamp drops below a predetermined value.

The controller may also manage an interlock system for safety and energy conservation purposes. If the lens drawer assembly from the coating or post-cure units are open the controller is preferably configured to prevent the lamps from turning on. This may prevent the operator from inadvertently becoming exposed to the light from the lamps. Lamps 24 for the coating unit 20 are preferably positioned on cover 22 (See Fig. 1). In order to prevent inadvertent exposure of the operator to light from lamps 24 a switch is preferably built into the cover, as described above. The controller is preferably configured to prevent the lamps 24 from turning on when the cover is open. The controller may also automatically turn lamps 24 off if the cover is opened when the lenses are on. Additionally, the controller may conserve energy by keeping fans and other cooling devices off when the lamps are off.

The controller may also be configured to interact with the operator. The controller preferably includes an input device 54 and a display screen 52. The input device may be a keyboard (e.g., a full computer keyboard or a modified keyboard), a light sensitive pad, a touch sensitive pad, or similar input device. A number the parameters controlled by the controller may be dependent on the input of the operator. In the initial set up of the apparatus, the controller may allow the operator to input the type of lens

being formed. This information may include type of lens (clear, ultraviolet absorbing, photochromic, colored, etc.), prescription, and type of coatings (e.g., scratch resistant or tint).

5 Based on this information the controller is preferably configured to transmit information back to the operator. The operator may be instructed to select mold members for the mold assembly. The mold members may be coded such that the controller may indicate to the operator which molds to select by transmitting the code for each mold member. The controller may also determine the type of gasket required to properly seal
10 the mold members together. Like the mold members, the gaskets may also be coded to make the selection of the appropriate gasket easier.

 The lens forming compositions may also be coded. For the production of certain kinds of lenses a specific lens forming composition may be required. The controller may
15 be configured to determine the specific composition required and transmit the code for that composition to the operator. The controller may also signal to the operator when certain operations need to be performed or when a particular operation is completed (e.g., when to place the mold assembly in the lens curing unit, when to remove the mold assembly, when to transfer the mold assembly, etc.).

20 Referring now to Fig. 38, another embodiment of a plastic lens curing apparatus is generally indicated by reference numeral 1000. As shown in Fig. 38, lens forming apparatus 1000 includes at least one coating unit 1020, a pair of stacked lens curing units 1030 and 1035, a post-cure unit 1040, and a controller 1050. Preferably, apparatus 1000
25 includes two coating units 1020. Coating unit 1020 is preferably configured to apply a coating layer to a mold member or a lens. Preferably, coating unit 1020 is a spin coating unit. Each of the lens curing units, 1030 and 1035, includes an activating light source for producing activating light. The activating light source is preferably configured to direct light toward a mold assembly. Post-cure unit 1040 is preferably configured to complete

the polymerization of partially cured plastic lenses. Post-cure unit 1040 preferably includes an activating light source and a heat source. Controller 1050 is preferably a programmable logic controller. Controller 1050 is preferably coupled to coating units 1020, lens curing units 1030 and 1035, and post-cure unit 1040, such that the controller
5 may be capable of substantially simultaneously operating the four units 1020, 1030, 1035 and 1040. Controller 50 may be a computer. During the production of plastic lenses the lens curing step may be the most time consuming part of the process. By adding additional curing units to the system the throughput of the system may be increased, allowing the operator to form more lenses in a given time period.

10

LENS FORMING COMPOSITIONS

The lens forming material may include any suitable liquid monomer or monomer mixture and any suitable photosensitive initiator. As used herein "monomer" is taken to
15 mean any compound capable of undergoing a polymerization reaction. Monomers may include non-polymerized material or partially polymerized material. When partially polymerized material is used as a monomer, the partially polymerized material preferably contains functional groups capable of undergoing further reaction to form a new polymer. The lens forming material preferably includes a photoinitiator that interacts with
20 activating light. In one embodiment, the photoinitiator absorbs ultraviolet light having a wavelength in the range of 300 to 400 nm. In another embodiment, the photoinitiator absorbs actinic light having a wavelength in the range of about 380 nm to 490 nm. The liquid lens forming material is preferably filtered for quality control and placed in the lens molding cavity 382 by pulling the annular gasket 380 away from one of the opposed
25 mold members 378 and injecting the liquid lens forming material into the lens molding cavity 382 (See Fig. 11). Once the lens molding cavity 382 is filled with such material, the annular gasket 380 is preferably replaced into its sealing relation with the opposed mold members 378.

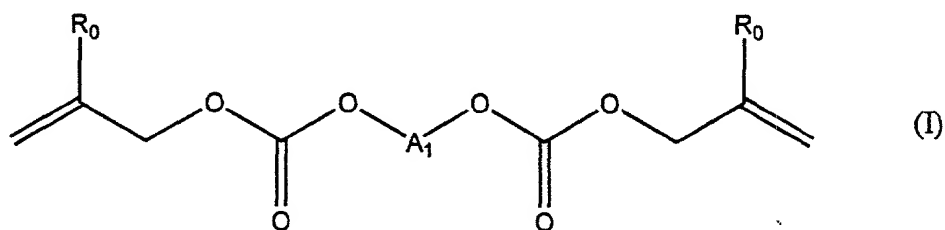
Those skilled in the art will recognize that once the cured lens is removed from the lens molding cavity 382 by disassembling the opposed mold members 378, the lens may be further processed in a conventional manner, such as by grinding its peripheral edge.

5

A polymerizable lens forming composition includes an aromatic-containing bis(allyl carbonate)-functional monomer and at least one polyethylenic-functional monomer containing two ethylenically unsaturated groups selected from acrylyl or methacrylyl. In a preferred embodiment, the composition further includes a suitable photoinitiator. In other preferred embodiments, the composition may include one or more polyethylenic-functional monomers containing three ethylenically unsaturated groups selected from acrylyl or methacrylyl, and a dye.

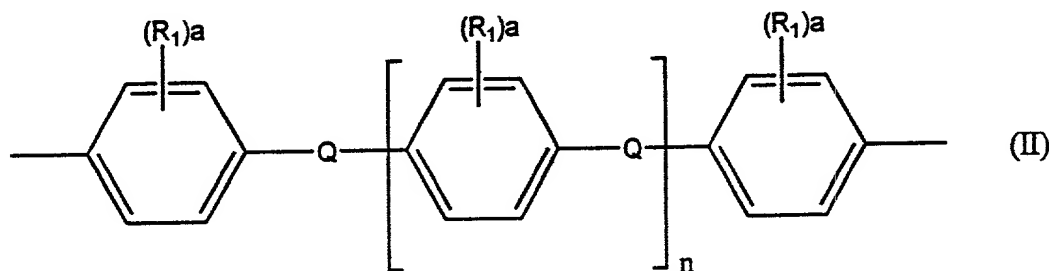
Aromatic-containing bis(allyl carbonate)-functional monomers include bis(allyl carbonates) of dihydroxy aromatic-containing material. The dihydroxy aromatic-containing material from which the monomer is derived may be one or more dihydroxy aromatic-containing compounds. Preferably the hydroxyl groups are attached directly to nuclear aromatic carbon atoms of the dihydroxy aromatic-containing compounds. The monomers are themselves known and may be prepared by procedures well known in the art.

The aromatic-containing bis(allyl carbonate)-functional monomers may be represented by the formula:



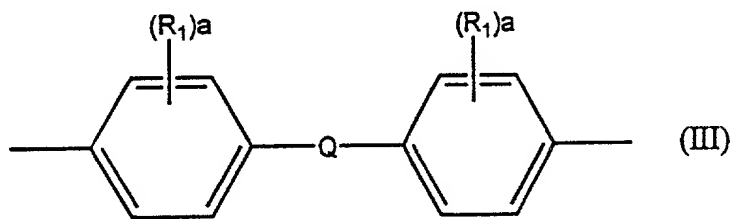
25

in which A_1 is the divalent radical derived from the dihydroxy aromatic-containing material and each R_0 is independently hydrogen, halo, or a C_1 - C_4 alkyl group. The alkyl group is usually methyl or ethyl. Examples of R_0 include hydrogen, chloro, bromo, fluoro, methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, isopropyl and n-butyl. Most commonly R_0 is hydrogen or methyl; hydrogen is preferred. A subclass of the divalent radical A_1 which is of particular usefulness is represented by the formula:



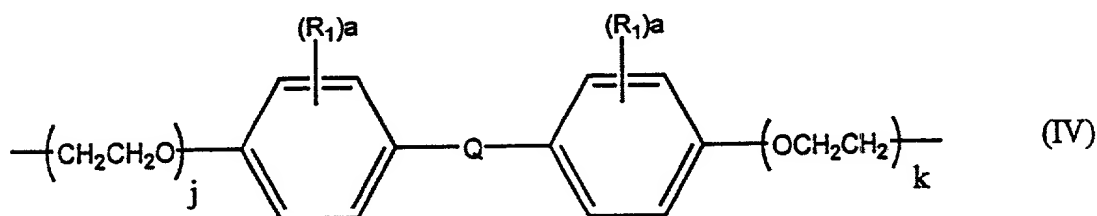
in which each R_1 is independently alkyl containing from 1 to about 4 carbon atoms, phenyl, or halo; the average value of each (a) is independently in the range of from 0 to 4; each Q is independently oxy, sulfonyl, alkanediyl having from 2 to about 4 carbon atoms, or alkylidene having from 1 to about 4 carbon atoms; and the average value of n is in the range of from 0 to about 3. Preferably Q is methylethylidene, viz., isopropylidene.

Preferably the value of n is zero, in which case A_1 is represented by the formula:



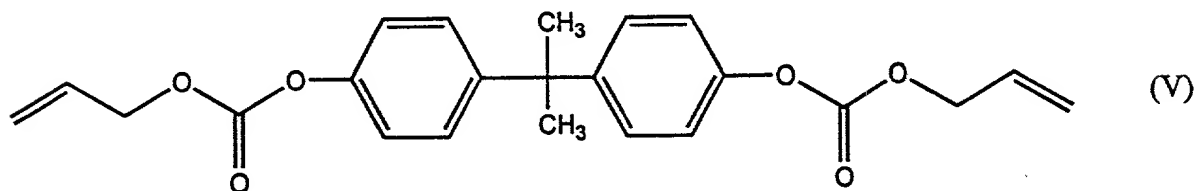
in which each R_1 , each a , and Q are as discussed in respect of Formula II. Preferably the two free bonds are both in the ortho or para positions. The para positions are especially preferred.

The dihydroxy aromatic-containing compounds from which A_1 is derived may also be polyether-functional chain extended compounds. Examples of such compounds include alkaline oxide extended bisphenols. Typically the alkaline oxide employed is ethylene oxide, propylene oxide, or mixtures thereof. By way of exemplification, when para, para-bisphenols are chain extended with ethylene oxide, the bivalent radical A_1 may often be represented by the formula:



where each R_1 , each a , and Q are as discussed in respect of Formula II, and the average values of j and k are each independently in the range of from about 1 to about 4.

A preferred aromatic-containing bis(allyl carbonate)-functional monomer is represented by the formula:



and is commonly known as bisphenol A bis(allyl carbonate).

A wide variety of compounds may be used as the polyethylenic functional monomer containing two or three ethylenically unsaturated groups. A preferred polyethylenic functional compound containing two or three ethylenically unsaturated groups may be generally described as the acrylic acid esters and the methacrylic acid

esters of aliphatic polyhydric alcohols, such as, for example, the di- and triacrylates and the di- and trimethacrylates of ethylene glycol, triethylene glycol, tetraethylene glycol, tetramethylene glycol, glycerol, diethyleneglycol, butyleneglycol, propyleneglycol, pentanediol, hexanediol, trimethylolpropane, and tripropyleneglycol. Examples of
5 specific suitable polyethylenic - functional monomers containing two or three ethylenically unsaturated groups include trimethylolpropanetriacrylate (TMPTA), tetraethylene glycol diacrylate (TTEGDA), tripropylene glycol diacrylate (TRPGDA), 1,6 hexanedioldimethacrylate (HDDMA), and hexanedioldiacrylate (HDDA).

10 In general, a photoinitiator for initiating the polymerization of the lens forming composition preferably exhibits an absorption spectrum over the 300-400 nm range. High absorptivity of a photoinitiator in this range, however, is not desirable, especially when casting a thick lens. The following are examples of illustrative photoinitiator compounds: methyl benzoylformate, 2-hydroxy-2-methyl-1-phenylpropan-1-one,
15 1-hydroxycyclohexyl phenyl ketone, 2,2-di-sec- butoxyacetophenone, 2,2-diethoxyacetophenone, 2,2-diethoxy-2-phenyl-acetophenone, 2,2-dimethoxy-2-phenyl-acetophenone, benzoin methyl ether, benzoin isobutyl ether, benzoin, benzil, benzyl disulfide, 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone, benzylideneacetophenone, benzophenone and acetophenone. Preferred photoinitiator compounds are 1-hydroxycyclohexyl phenyl
20 ketone (which is commercially available from Ciba-Geigy as Irgacure 184), methyl benzoylformate (which is commercially available from Polysciences, Inc.), or mixtures thereof.

Methyl benzoylformate is a generally preferred photoinitiator because it tends to
25 provide a slower rate of polymerization. The slower rate of polymerization tends to prevent excessive heat buildup (and resultant cracking of the lens) during polymerization. In addition, it is relatively easy to mix liquid methyl benzoylformate (which is liquid at ambient temperatures) with many acrylates, diacrylates, and allyl carbonate compounds to form a lens forming composition. The lenses produced with the methyl

benzoylformate photoinitiator tend to exhibit more favorable stress patterns and uniformity.

5 A strongly absorbing photoinitiator will absorb most of the incident light in the first millimeter of lens thickness, causing rapid polymerization in that region. The remaining light will produce a much lower rate of polymerization below this depth and will result in a lens that has visible distortions. An ideal photoinitiator will exhibit high activity, but will have a lower extinction coefficient in the useful range. A lower extinction coefficient of photoinitiators at longer wavelengths tends to allow the
10 activating light to penetrate deeper into the reaction system. This deeper penetration of the activating light allows photoinitiator radicals to form uniformly throughout the sample and provide excellent overall cure. Since the sample may be irradiated from both top and bottom, a system in which appreciable activating light reaches the center of the thickest portion of the lens is preferred. The photoinitiator solubility and compatibility
15 with the monomer system is also an important requirement.

An additional consideration is the effect of the photoinitiator fragments in the finished polymer. Some photoinitiators generate fragments that impart a yellow color to the finished lens. Although such lenses actually absorb very little visible light, they may
20 be cosmetically undesirable.

Photoinitiators are often very system specific so that photoinitiators that are efficient in one system may function poorly in another. In addition, the initiator concentration, to a large extent, may be dependent on the incident light intensity and the
25 monomer composition. The identity of the initiator and its concentration may be important for any particular formulation. A concentration of initiator that is too high may lead to cracking and yellowing of the lens. Concentrations of initiator that are too low may lead to incomplete polymerization and a soft material.

Dyes and/or pigments are optional materials that may be present when high transmission of light is not necessary.

The listing of optional ingredients discussed above is by no means exhaustive.

- 5 These and other ingredients may be employed in their customary amounts for their customary purposes so long as they do not seriously interfere with good polymer formulating practice.

1. Activating Light Curable Lens Forming Compositions

10

According to a preferred embodiment, a lens forming composition that may be cured with activating light includes an aromatic-containing bis(allyl carbonate) functional monomer, preferably bisphenol A bis(allyl carbonate), admixed with one or more faster reacting polyethylenic functional monomers containing two acrylate or methacrylate groups such as 1,6 hexanediol dimethacrylate (HDDMA), 1,6 hexanediol diacrylate (HDDA), tetraethylene glycol diacrylate (TEGDA), and tripropylene glycol diacrylate (TRPGDA) and optionally a polyethylenic functional monomer containing three acrylate groups such as trimethylolpropane triacrylate (TMPTA). Generally, compounds containing acrylate groups polymerize much faster than those containing allyl groups.

20

According to one embodiment, the liquid lens forming composition includes bisphenol A bis(allyl carbonate) in place of DEG-BAC. The bisphenol A bis(allyl-carbonate) monomer has a higher refractive index than DEG-BAC making it more suitable for the production of thinner lenses, which may be important with relatively thick positive or negative lenses. The bisphenol A bis(allyl-carbonate) monomer is commercially available from PPG Industries under the trade name HIRI I or CR-73. Lenses made from this product sometimes have a very slight, barely detectable, degree of yellowing. A small amount of a blue dye consisting of 9, 10-anthracenedione, 1-hydroxy-4-[(4-methylphenyl)amino] available as Thermoplast Blue 684 from BASF

25

Wyandotte Corp. is preferably added to the composition to counteract the yellowing. In addition, the yellowing tends to disappear if the lens is subjected to the above-described post-cure heat treatment. Moreover, if not post-cured the yellowing tends to disappear at ambient temperature after approximately 2 months.

5

TTEGDA, available from Sartomer and Radcure, is a diacrylate monomer that, preferably, is included in the composition because it is a fast polymerizing monomer that reduces yellowing and yields a very clear product. If too much TTEGDA is included in the more preferred composition, i.e., greater than about 25% by weight, however, the finished lens may be prone to cracking and may be too flexible as this material softens at temperatures above 40 °C. If TTEGDA is excluded altogether, the finished lens may be too brittle.

10

HDDMA, available from Sartomer, is a dimethacrylate monomer that has a very stiff backbone between the two methacrylate groups. HDDMA, preferably, is included in the composition because it yields a stiffer polymer and increases the hardness and strength of the finished lens. This material is quite compatible with the bisphenol A bis(allyl carbonate) monomer. HDDMA contributes to high temperature stiffness, polymer clarity and speed of polymerization.

15

20

TRPGDA, available from Sartomer and Radcure, is a diacrylate monomer that, preferably, is included in the composition because it provides good strength and hardness without adding brittleness to the finished lens. This material is also stiffer than TTEGDA.

25

TMPTA, available from Sartomer and Radcure, is a triacrylate monomer that, preferably, is included in the composition because it provides more crosslinking in the finished lens than the difunctional monomers. TMPTA has a shorter backbone than TTEGDA and increases the high temperature stiffness and hardness of the finished lens.

Moreover, this material contributes to the prevention of optical distortions in the finished lens. TMPTA also contributes to high shrinkage during polymerization. The inclusion of too much of this material in the more preferred composition may make the finished lens too brittle.

5

Certain of the monomers that are preferably utilized, such as TTEGDA, TRPGDA and TMPTA, include impurities and have a yellow color in certain of their commercially available forms. The yellow color of these monomers is preferably reduced or removed by passing them through a column of alumina (basic) which includes aluminum oxide powder - basic. After passage through the alumina column differences between monomers obtained from different sources may be substantially eliminated. It is preferred, however, that the monomers be obtained from a source which provides the monomers with the least amount of impurities contained therein. The composition is preferably filtered prior to polymerization thereof to remove suspended particles.

15

2. Lens Forming Compositions Including Ultraviolet/Visible Light Absorbing Materials

Materials that absorb various degrees of ultraviolet/visible light may be used in an eyeglass lens to inhibit ultraviolet/visible light from being transmitted through the eyeglass lens. The phrase "ultraviolet/visible light" is taken to mean light having a wavelength in the ultraviolet light range or both the ultraviolet and visible light ranges. The phrase "ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds" refers to compounds which absorb ultraviolet/visible light. An eyeglass lens that includes ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds advantageously inhibits ultraviolet/visible light from being transmitted to the eye of a user wearing the lens. Thus, eyeglass lenses containing ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds may function to protect the eyes of a person from damaging ultraviolet/visible light. Photochromic pigments are one type of ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds. Photochromic inorganic lenses which contain silver halide particles or cuprous halide particles suspended throughout the body

30

of the lens are well known and have been commercially available for decades. Such inorganic lenses, however, suffer the disadvantage of being relatively heavy and less comfortable to the wearer when compared to organic lenses. Consequently, the majority of the eyeglass lenses produced today are typically formed from organic materials rather than inorganic materials. Accordingly, photochromic plastic eyeglass lenses have been the subject of considerable attention in recent years.

Efforts to provide a plastic eyeglass lens which demonstrates photochromic performance have primarily centered around permeating and/or covering the surface(s) of an already formed lens with photochromic pigments. This general technique may be accomplished by a number of specific methods. For example, (a) the lens may be soaked in a heated bath which contains photochromic pigments, (b) photochromic pigments may be transferred into the surface of a plastic lens via a solvent assisted transfer process, or (c) a coating containing photochromic pigments may be applied to the surface of a lens. A problem with such methods may be that the lens often might not absorb enough of the photochromic pigments at low temperatures, resulting in an eyeglass lens which does not exhibit acceptable photochromic performance. Unfortunately, increasing the temperature used during absorption of the photochromic pigments may not be a solution to this problem since at high temperatures degradation of the polymer contained within the lens may occur.

Attempts have also been made to incorporate photochromic pigments into the liquid monomer from which plastic lenses are thermally polymerized. See U.S. Patent No. 4,913,544 to Rickwood et al., wherein it is disclosed that triethyleneglycol dimethacrylate monomer was combined with 0.2% by weight of various spiro-oxazine compounds and 0.1% benzoyl peroxide and subsequently thermally polymerized to form non-prescription eyeglass lenses. Generally, efforts to incorporate photochromic pigments into the liquid monomer from which the lenses are polymerized have been unsuccessful. It is believed that the organic peroxide catalysts utilized to initiate the

thermal polymerization reaction tend to damage the photochromic pigments, impairing their photochromic response.

5 Curing of an eyeglass lens using activating light to initiate the polymerization of a lens forming composition generally requires that the composition exhibit a high degree of activating light transmissibility so that the activating radiation may penetrate to the deeper regions of the lens cavity. Otherwise the resulting cast lens may possess optical aberrations and distortions. The cast lens may also contain layers of cured material in the regions closest to the transparent mold faces, sandwiching inner layers which are either
10 incompletely cured, gelled, barely gelled, or even liquid. Often, when even small amounts of ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds of the types well known in the art are added to a normally light curable lens forming composition, substantially the entire amount of lens forming composition contained within the lens cavity may remain liquid in the presence of activating light.

15 Photochromic pigments which have utility for photochromic eyeglass lenses absorb ultraviolet light strongly and change from an unactivated state to an activated state when exposed to ultraviolet light. The presence of photochromic pigments, as well as other ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds within a lens forming composition,
20 generally does not permit enough activating radiation to penetrate into the depths of the lens cavity sufficient to cause photoinitiators to break down and initiate polymerization of the lens forming composition. Thus, it may be difficult to cure a lens forming composition containing ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds using activating light (e.g., if the activating light has a wavelength in the ultraviolet or visible region). It
25 is therefore desirable to provide a method for using activating light to initiate polymerization of an eyeglass lens forming monomer which contains ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds, in spite of the high activating light absorption characteristics of the ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds. Examples of such ultraviolet/visible

light absorbing compounds other than photochromic pigments are fixed dyes and colorless additives.

In an embodiment, an ophthalmic eyeglass lens may be made from a lens forming composition comprising a monomer, an ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compound, a photoinitiator, and a co-initiator. Herein, an "ophthalmic eyeglass lens" is taken to mean any plastic eyeglass lens, including a prescription lens, a non-prescription lens, a progressive lens, a sunglass lens, and a bifocal lens. The lens forming composition, in liquid form, is preferably placed in a mold cavity defined by a first mold member and a second mold member. It is believed that activating light which is directed toward the mold members to activate the photoinitiator causes the photoinitiator to form a polymer chain radical. The polymer chain radical preferably reacts with the co-initiator more readily than with the monomer. The co-initiator may react with a fragment or an active species of either the photoinitiator or the polymer chain radical to produce a monomer initiating species in the regions of the lens cavity where the level of activating light may be either relatively low or not present.

Preferably, the monomers selected as components of the lens forming composition are capable of dissolving the ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds added to them. Herein, "dissolving" is taken to mean being substantially homogeneously mixed with. For example, monomers may be selected from a group including polyether (allyl carbonate) monomers, multi-functional acrylate monomers, and multi-functional methacrylic monomers for use in an ultraviolet/visible light absorbing lens forming composition.

25

In an embodiment, the following mixture of monomers, hereinafter referred to as PRO-629, may be blended together before addition of other components required to make the lens forming composition. This blend of monomers is preferably used as the basis for

a lens forming composition to which ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds are added.

- 32% Tripropyleneglycol diacrylate (SR-306)
- 5 21% Tetraethyleneglycol diacrylate (SR-268)
- 20% Trimethylolpropane triacrylate (SR-351)
- 17% Bisphenol A bis allyl carbonate (HiRi)
- 10% Hexanediol dimethacrylate (SR-239)

10 The acrylic and methacrylic monomers listed above are commercially available from Sartomer Company in Exton, Pennsylvania. The bisphenol A bis allyl carbonate is commercially available from PPG in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The hexanediol dimethacrylate is hereinafter referred to as HDDMA.

15 A polymerization inhibitor may be added to the monomer mixture at relatively low levels to inhibit polymerization of the monomer at inappropriate times (e.g., during storage). Preferably about 0 to 50 ppm of monomethylether hydroquinone (MEHQ) are added to the monomer mixture. It is also preferred that the acidity of the monomer mixture be as low as possible. Preferably less than about 100 ppm residual acrylic acid
20 exists in the mixture. It is also preferred that the water content of the monomer mixture be relatively low, preferably less than about 0.15 %.

Photoinitiators include: 1-hydroxycyclohexylphenyl ketone commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 184; mixtures of bis(2,6-
25 dimethoxybenzoyl) (2,4,4-trimethyl phenyl) phosphine oxide and 2-hydroxy-2-methyl-1-phenyl-propan-1-one commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 1700; mixtures of bis(2,6-dimethoxybenzoyl) (2,4,4 trimethyl phenyl) phosphine oxide and 1-hydroxycyclohexylphenyl ketone commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade names of Irgacure 1800 and Irgacure 1850; 2,2-

dimethoxy-2-phenyl acetophenone commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 651; 2-hydroxy-2-methyl-1-phenyl-propan-1-one commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade names of Darocur 1173; mixtures of 2,4,6-trimethylbenzoyl-diphenylphosphine oxide and 2-hydroxy-2-methyl-1-phenyl-propan-1-one commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Darocur 4265; 2,2-diethoxyacetophenone (DEAP) commercially available from First Chemical Corporation of Pascagoula, Mississippi, benzil dimethyl ketal commercially available from Sartomer Company under the trade name of KB-1; an alpha hydroxy ketone initiator commercially available from Sartomer company under the trade name of Esacure KIP100F; 2-methyl thioxanthone (MTX), 2-chloro-thioxanthone (CTX), thioxanthone (TX), and xanthone, all commercially available from Aldrich Chemical; 2-isopropyl-thioxanthone (ITX) commercially available from Aceto Chemical in Flushing, New York; mixtures of triaryl sulfonium hexafluoroantimonate and propylene carbonate commercially available from Sartomer Company under the trade names of SarCat CD 1010, SarCat 1011, and SarCat KI85; diaryliodonium hexafluoroantimonate commercially available from Sartomer Company under the trade name of SarCat CD-1012; mixtures of benzophenone and 1-hydroxycyclohexylphenyl ketone commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 500; 2-benzyl-2-N,N-dimethylamino-1-(4-morpholinophenyl)-1-butanone commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 369; 2-methyl-1-[4-(methylthio)phenyl]-2-morpholino-propan-1-one commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 907; bis(η⁵-2,4-cyclopentadien-1-yl)-bis-[2,6-difluoro-3-(1H-pyrrol-1-yl) phenyl] titanium commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 784 DC; mixtures of 2,4,6-trimethyl-benzophenone and 4-methyl-benzophenone commercially available from Sartomer Company under the trade name of EsaCure TZT; and benzoyl peroxide and methyl benzoyl formate both available from Aldrich Chemical in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

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A preferred photoinitiator is bis(2,6-dimethoxybenzoyl) (2,4,4 trimethyl phenyl) phosphine oxide, commercially available from Ciba Additives in Tarrytown, New York under the trade name of CGI-819. The amount of CGI-819 present in a lens forming composition containing photochromic compounds preferably ranges from about 30 ppm
5 by weight to about 2000 ppm by weight.

Co-initiators include reactive amine co-initiators commercially available from Sartomer Company under the trade names of CN-381, CN-383, CN-384, and CN-386, where these co-initiators are monoacrylic amines, diacrylic amines, or mixtures thereof.
10 Other co-initiators include N-methyldiethanolamine (NMDEA), triethanolamine (TEA), ethyl-4-dimethylaminobenzoate (E-4-DMAB), ethyl-2-dimethylaminobenzoate (E-2-DMAB), all commercially available from Aldrich Chemicals. Co-initiators which may also be used include n-butoxyethyl-4-dimethylamino benzoate, *p*-dimethyl amino benzaldehyde. Other co-initiators include N, N-dimethyl-*p*-toluidine, octyl-*p*-
15 (dimethylamino) benzoate commercially available from The First Chemical Group of Pascagoula, Mississippi.

Preferably, the co-initiator is N-methyldiethanolamine (NMDEA) commercially available from Aldrich Chemical in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, CN-384 commercially
20 available from Sartomer Company, or CN-386 also commercially available from Sartomer Company. The quantity of NMDEA present in a lens forming composition containing photochromic pigments is preferably between about 1 ppm by weight and 7% by weight and more preferably between about 0.3% and 2% by weight. Further, certain fixed pigments which may be added to the lens forming composition to create a
25 background color within the lens (i.e., to tint the lens), may also function as co-initiators. Examples of such fixed pigments include Thermoplast Blue P, Oil Soluble Blue II, Thermoplast Red 454, Thermoplast Yellow 104, Zapon Brown 286, Zapon Brown 287, all commercially available from BASF Corporation in Holland, Michigan.

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Ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds which may be added to a normally ultraviolet/visible light transmissible lens forming composition include 2-(2H benzotriazole-2-yl)-4-(1,1,3,3 tetramethylbutyl)phenol and 2-hydroxy-4-methoxybenzophenone, both commercially available from Aldrich Chemical as well as

5 mixtures of 2-[4-((2-hydroxy-3-dodecyloxypropyl)-oxy)-2-hydroxyphenyl]-4,6-bis(2,4-dimethylphenyl)-1,3,5-triazine and 2-[4-((2-hydroxy-3-tridecyloxypropyl)-oxy)-2-hydroxyphenyl]-4,6-bis(2,4-dimethylphenyl)-1,3,5-triazine commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Tinuvin 400, mixtures of poly (oxy-1,2-ethanediyl), α -(3-(3-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-5-(1,1-dimethylethyl)-4-hydroxyphenyl)-1-

10 oxopropyl)- ω -hydroxy and poly (oxy-1,2-ethanediyl), α -(3-(3-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-5-(1,1-dimethylethyl)-4-hydroxyphenyl)-1-oxopropyl)- ω -(3-(3-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-5-(1,1-dimethylethyl)-4-hydroxyphenyl)-1-oxopropoxy) commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Tinuvin 1130. Other ultraviolet/visible light absorbers may include Tinuvin 328, Tinuvin 900, 2-(2 hydroxy-5-methyl-phenyl)

15 benzotriazole, ethyl-2-cyano 3,3-diphenyl acrylate, and phenyl salicylate.

While any number of families of photochromic pigments may be incorporated into the blend of monomers, either individually or in combination, spiropyrans, spironaphthoxazines, spiropyridobenzoxazines, spirobenzoxazines, naphthopyrans,

20 benzopyrans, spirooxazines, spironaphthopyrans, indolinospironaphthoxazines, indolinospironaphthopyrans, diarylnaphthopyrans, and organometallic materials are of particular interest. A phenylmercury compound available from Marks Polarized Corporation in Hauppauge, New York under the trade name of A241 may be an appropriate organometallic material. The quantity of photochromic pigments present in

25 the lens forming composition is preferably sufficient to provide observable photochromic effect. The amount of photochromic pigments present in the lens forming composition may widely range from about 1 ppm by weight to 5% by weight. In preferred compositions, the photochromic pigments are present in ranges from about 30 ppm to 2000 ppm. In the more preferred compositions, the photochromic pigments are present in

ranges from about 150 ppm to 1000 ppm. The concentration may be adjusted depending upon the thickness of the lens being produced to obtain optimal visible light absorption characteristics.

5 In an embodiment, hindered amine light stabilizers may be added to the lens forming composition. It is believed that these materials act to reduce the rate of degradation of the cured polymer caused by exposure to ultraviolet light by deactivating harmful polymer radicals. These compounds may be effective in terminating oxygen and carbon free radicals, and thus interfering with the different stages of auto-oxidation and
10 photo-degradation. A useful hindered amine light stabilizer is bis(1,2,2,6,6-pentamethyl-4-piperidinyl)-sebacate commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Tinuvin 292. Hindered phenolic anti-oxidants and thermal stabilizers may also be added to a lens forming composition. The hindered phenolic compounds hereof include thiodiethylene bis(3,5,-di-tert-butyl-4-hydroxy)hydroxycinnamate commercially available
15 from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irganox 1035 and octadecyl-3,5-bis(1,1-dimethylethyl)-4-hydroxybenzene-propanoate commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irganox 1076.

20 Preferably, more than one monomer and more than one initiator are used in a lens forming composition to ensure that the initial polymerization of the lens forming composition with activating light does not occur over too short a period of time. The use of such a lens forming composition may allow greater control over the gel formation, resulting in better control of the optical quality of the lens. Further, greater control over the rate of exothermic heat generation may be achieved. Thus, cracking of the lens and
25 premature release of the lens from the mold which are typically caused by the release of heat may be prevented. An example of a poor initiator system was observed when CGI-819 was used alone as a photoinitiator in combination with the PRO-629 monomer blend to which ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compounds had been added. When such an initiator system was used, a fast rate of reaction occurred near the surface of the lens

cavity while a very slow rate of reaction occurred in the deeper regions of the cavity. The resultant lens exhibited unwanted waves and distortions.

In another example, a small amount of a co-initiator, i.e., NMDEA was added to the above lens forming composition. During the curing process, two separate waves of heat were generated when the composition was irradiated continuously with activating light at about 600 microwatts/cm². One possible explanation for this phenomena is that the first wave resulted from reaction of the NMDEA and the second wave resulted from the reaction of the unconsumed portion of the CGI-819. Another possible explanation is that the rate of reaction was faster in the top portion than in the bottom portion of the lens forming composition since activating light was separately directed toward both the bottom and the top mold members. A third wave of heat generation may also occur if the rate of reaction at the middle portion of the lens forming composition is different from the rates at the bottom and top portions. Unfortunately, the resulting lens possessed waves and distortions. It is postulated, however, that as the amounts of both CGI-819 and NMDEA are increased, the two waves of exothermic heat will move closer together in time, causing the optical quality of the lens to improve, the hardness of the lens to increase, and the rate of heat generation to be slow enough to prevent cracking and premature release of the lens from the mold.

It is anticipated that the optimal amount of initiators may be achieved when the total amount of both initiators are minimized subject to the constraint of complete polymerization and production of a rigid, aberration free lens. The relative proportions of the photoinitiator to the co-initiator may be optimized by experimentation. For example, an ultraviolet/visible light absorptive lens forming composition that includes a photoinitiator with no co-initiator may be cured. If waves and distortions are observed in the resulting lens, a co-initiator may then be added to the lens forming composition by increasing amounts until a lens having the best optical properties is formed. It is anticipated that excess co-initiator in the lens forming composition should be avoided to

[illegible]

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Photoinitiator Guide

Photoinitiator	Yellowness	Odor	Shelf Life	Lens Forming Composition Type		
				UV Absorptive Photochromic	UV Absorptive Fixed Pigments	UV Absorptive Colorless
CGI 819	Moderate	Low	Good	Good	Good	Good
Irgacure 184	Low	Low	Good	Good	Good	Good
Irgacure 651	High	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Good	Less Preferred
Irgacure 1700	High	Low	Fair	Good	Good	Less Preferred
Irgacure 1800	Moderate	Low	Good	Good	Good	Less Preferred
Irgacure 1850	Moderate	Low	Good	Good	Good	Good
Darocur 1173	High	Low	Good	Good	Good	Less Preferred
Darocur 4265	High	Moderate	Fair	Good	Good	Less Preferred
DEAP	High	Strong	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
KB-1	High	Strong	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
EsaCure KIP100F	High	Strong	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
Irgacure 369	High	Moderate	Poor	Less Preferred	Good	Less Preferred
Irgacure 500	High	Strong	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
Irgacure 784 DC	High	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
Irgacure 907	High	Strong	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
Benzoyl peroxide	Moderate	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
Methyl benzoyl formate	Moderate	Low	Fair	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
EsaCure TZT	High	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
ITX	High	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Good	Good
MTX	High	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Good	Good
CTX	High	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
TX	High	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
Xanthone	High	Low	Poor	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
CD-1010	Low	Low	Poor	Good	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
CD-1011	Low	Low	Poor	Good	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
CD1012	Low	Low	Poor	Good	Good	Good

Co-initiator Guide

Co-initiator	Lens Forming Composition Type		
	UV Absorptive Photochromic	UV Absorptive Fixed Pigments	UV Absorptive Colorless
CN-383		Good	
CN-384	Good	Good	Good
CN-386	Good	Good	Good
NMDEA	Good	Good	Good
N,NMDEA	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	
TEA	Less Preferred	Less Preferred	
E-4-DMAB	Good	Less Preferred	Less Preferred
E-2-DMAB		Less Preferred	Less Preferred

As mentioned above, exothermic reactions occur during the curing process of the lens forming composition. The thicker portions of the lens forming composition may generate more heat than the thinner portions of the composition as a result of the exothermic reactions taking place. It is believed that the speed of reaction in the thicker sections is slower than in the thinner sections. Thus, in a positive lens a "donut effect" may occur in which the relatively thin outer portion of the lens forming composition reaches its fully cured state before the relatively thick inner portion of the lens forming composition. Conversely, in a negative lens the relatively thin inner portion of the lens forming composition may reach its fully cured state before the relatively thick outer portion of the lens forming composition.

An eyeglass lens formed using the above described lens forming composition may be applicable for use as a prescription lens or for a non-prescription lens. Particularly, such a lens may be used in sunglasses. Advantageously, photochromic sunglass lenses would remain light enough in color to allow a user to see through them clearly while at the same time prohibiting ultraviolet light from passing through the lenses. In one

embodiment, a background dye may be added to the photochromic lens to make the lens appear to be a dark shade of color at all times like typical sunglasses.

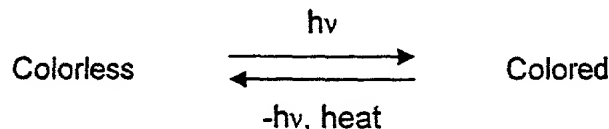
3. Variable Color Photochromic Lens Forming Compositions

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Photochromic compounds tend to absorb certain wavelengths of light strongly and change from a colorless state to a colored state. The "colorless state" of a photochromic compound is defined as the state in which the compound exhibits no color or only a slight amount of color. The "colored state" of a photochromic compound is defined as the state in which the photochromic compound exhibits a visible light color significantly stronger than the colorless state. A "photochromic activating light source" is defined as any light source that produces light having a wavelength which causes a photochromic compound to change from a colorless state to a colored state. "Photochromic activating light" is defined as light having a wavelength capable of causing a photochromic compound to change from a colorless state to a colored state. Photochromic activating light typically includes light having a wavelength from between about 200 nm to about 500 nm. A photochromic activating light source may also produce other wavelengths of light, besides photochromic activating light.

20 A photochromic compound which is transparent and normally colorless will, upon exposure to a photochromic activating light source (e.g., ultraviolet light), become colored and, therefore, less visible light transmissive. When removed from the photochromic activating light source, the photochromic substance tends to revert back to its colorless state. This may be represented by the following equation:

25



09700019 020501
T06020 ST00260

The colorless form is believed to be in equilibrium with the colored form. The equilibrium between the colorless form and the colored form may be controlled by the presence of photochromic activating light (represented by $h\nu$). If a photochromic compound is exposed to a photochromic activating light source, the equilibrium tends to shift toward the colored form of the photochromic compound. When the photochromic activating light source is removed, or reduced, or if the photochromic compound is heated, the equilibrium tends to shift back toward the colorless form of the photochromic compound. Photochromic compounds of this type may be particularly useful in eyeglass lenses. In the absence of photochromic activating light (e.g., when indoors) the glasses tend to remain colorless and light transmissive. When exposed to a photochromic activating light source (e.g., sunlight) the photochromic compounds become activated and colored, lowering the light transmittance of the lens. The term "activated color" is defined as the color which an eyeglass attains when photochromic compounds, which are included in the eyeglass lens, become activated and colored when exposed to a photochromic activating light source. In this manner, photochromic compounds may allow a single lens to be used as both an indoor lens and an outdoor lens.

When incorporated into transparent plastic lenses and activated by exposure to a photochromic activating light source, photochromic compounds tend to exhibit variety of colors (e.g., red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, purple, violet, gray, and brown), causing the lens that the photochromic compounds are disposed within to exhibit the color of the photochromic compound. Thus, the activated color of a photochromic eyeglass lens may be controlled by the particular photochromic compounds dispersed within the eyeglass lens.

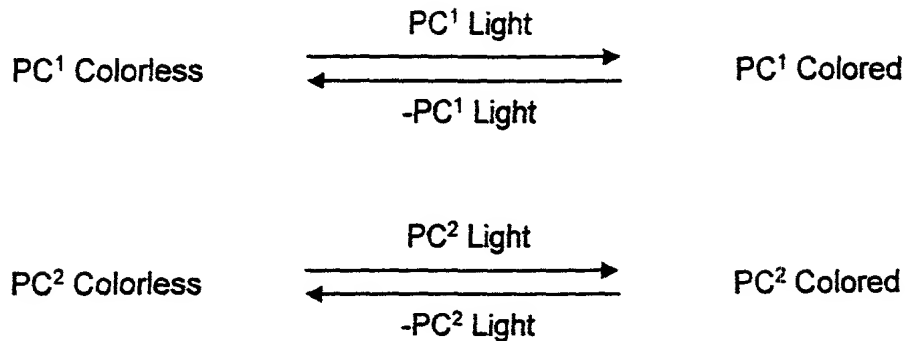
It is known that the activated color of a photochromic eyeglass lens may take on more neutral colors, such as brown or gray, by forming the eyeglass lens with two or more photochromic compounds present. U.S. Patent No. 4,968,454 to Crano et. al., describes a composition which includes two photochromic compounds used to form

plastic lenses. The formed plastic lenses exhibit a gray or brown color in the presence of a photochromic activating light source. Crano et. al., describes the use of two or more organic photochromic compounds within a plastic lens. One of the organic photochromic compounds exhibits an absorption maximum in the range between about 590 nm to about 700 nm in the presence of a photochromic activating light source. The other organic photochromic compound exhibits an absorption maximum in the range between about 400 nm and less than about 500 nm. The ratios of the compounds may be varied to produce lenses which exhibit a variety of activated colors. Typically, either the ratios of the photochromic compounds or the specific photochromic compound used may be varied to effect a change in the activated color of the lens.

In an embodiment, a composition which includes two or more photochromic compounds may further include a light effector composition to produce a lens which exhibits an activated color which differs from an activated color produced by the photochromic compounds without the light effector composition. The light effector composition may include any compound which absorbs photochromic activating light. Light effector compositions may include photoinitiators, non-photochromic ultraviolet/visible light absorbers (as defined above), non-photochromic dyes, and ultraviolet light stabilizers. In this manner, the activated color of a lens may be altered without altering the ratio and or composition of the photochromic compounds. This may be particularly important when large batches of lens forming compositions are prepared before use. If photochromic lenses which exhibit a variety of activated colors are to be produced, it is typically necessary to create a separate lens forming composition for each colored lens. By using a light effector composition, a single lens forming composition may be used as a base solution to which a light effector may be added in order to alter the activated color of the formed lens.

The activated color of a photochromic lens may be determined by the visible light absorption of the photochromic compounds in their colored state. When two

photochromic compounds are present, the equilibrium between the colored and the colorless forms may be represented by the following equations:

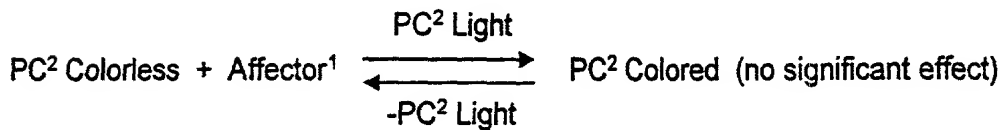
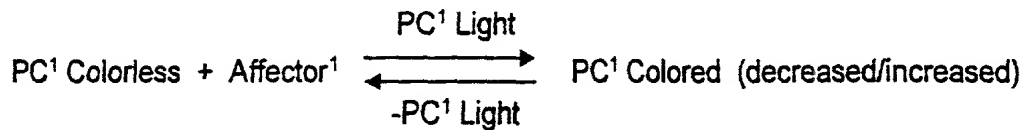


- 5 Where PC¹ Colorless represents the colorless form of the first photochromic compound; PC² Colorless represents the colorless form of the second photochromic compound; PC light¹ represents the wavelengths of light which cause PC¹ Colorless to shift its colored state (PC¹ Colored) ; PC light² represents the wavelengths of light which cause PC¹ Colorless to shift to its colored state (PC² Colored). As depicted in Fig. 37, the
- 10 wavelength of light which may activate the photochromic compounds PC¹ and PC² may differ depending on the chemical structure of the photochromic compounds. PC light¹, which activates the first photochromic compound PC¹, has a wavelength in the range between about λ^1 and λ^2 nm. PC light², which activates the second photochromic compound, has a wavelength in the range between about λ^3 and λ^4 nm. These wavelength
- 15 ranges may differ (as depicted in Fig. 37) or may be substantially the same.

The addition of a light effector composition which absorbs photochromic activating light may cause a change in the activated color of the formed lens. The change in activated color may be dependent on the range of photochromic activating light

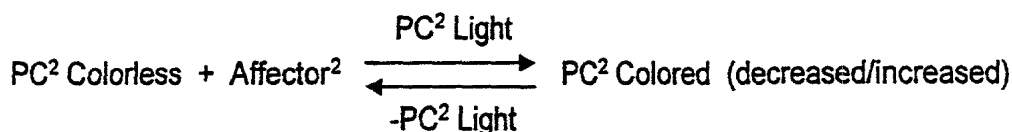
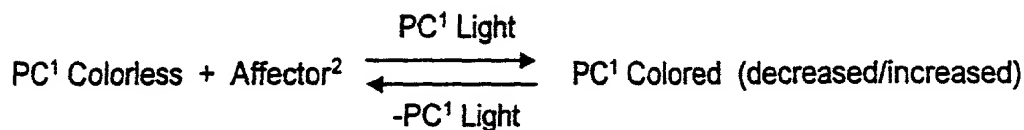
20 absorbed by the light effector composition. The addition of light effector compositions may have different effects on the activated color of the lens, depending on the absorbance of the light effector composition. In one embodiment, the light effector composition may interfere with the photochromic activity of the first photochromic compound (PC¹). As

illustrated in the equations below, the presence of a light effector composition (Effector¹) may cause a shift in the equilibrium of PC¹ while having little or no effect on PC².



- 5 Such an effect may cause an increase or decrease in the concentration of PC¹ Colored produced when the lens is exposed to a photochromic activating light source. The equilibrium of the other photochromic compound PC² may not be significantly altered. Thus, the activated color of the lens may be significantly different than the activated color of a lens that does not include a light effector composition (Effector¹). In the above case,
- 10 if the concentration of PC¹ Colored is, for example, decreased, the activated color of the lens may become shifted toward the activated color of PC². For example, if the activated color of a lens which includes PC¹ only is blue-green; with PC² only is red; and with both PC¹ and PC² is gray; the activated color of the lens may become more red (e.g., shift from gray to green, yellow, orange or red) if the concentration of PC¹ Colored is decreased. It
- 15 is theorized that such an effector may have an absorbance in a region of light similar to the PC Light¹ region. The effector may interfere with the absorption of photochromic activating light by PC¹ by competing with PC¹ for the light. PC² remains relatively unaffected by the light effector composition since its active photochromic activating light range differs significantly from the photochromic activating light range for PC¹. This is
- 20 graphically illustrated in Fig. 37, where Effector¹ is depicted as having an absorption within the PC¹ Light¹ region. By competing with PC¹ for the photochromic activating light, Effector¹ may cause a decrease in the amount of PC¹ Colored being produced.

In another embodiment, a light effector may interact with both photochromic compounds, altering the amount of PC¹ colored and PC² colored produced. The equation below depicts this case:



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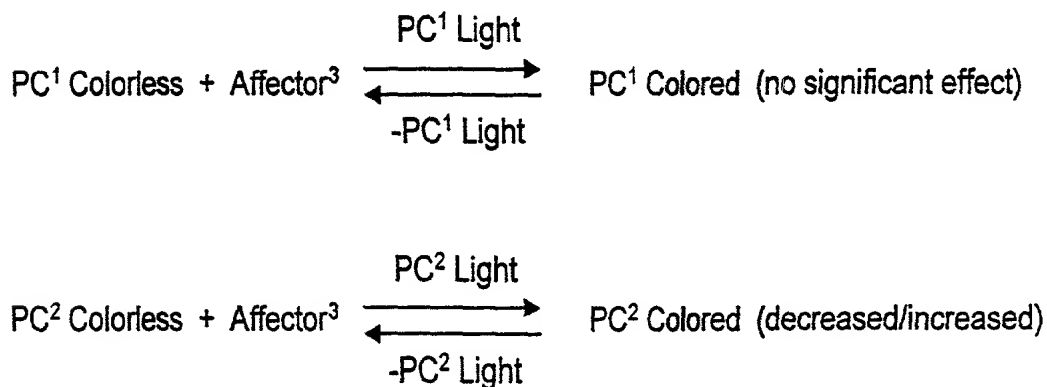
Such an effect may cause an increase or decrease in the concentration of both PC¹ Colored and PC² Colored produced when the lens is exposed to a photochromic activating light source. This change in the equilibrium may cause the activated color of the lens to be significantly different than the activated color of a lens that does not include a light effector composition. In the above case if the concentration of PC¹ Colored is, for example, decreased and the concentration of PC² Colored is, for example, increased, the activated color of the lens may become shifted toward the activated color of PC² colored. For example, if the activated color of a lens which includes PC¹ only is blue-green; with PC² only is red; and with both PC¹ and PC² is gray; the activated color of the lens may become more red in the presence of the light effector composition. The

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direction of the shift may depend on which photochromic compound is effected more by the presence of the light effector composition. It is theorized that the light effector composition (Effector²) may have an absorbance in a region that significantly overlaps the PC Light¹ and PC Light² regions. The light effector composition interferes with the absorption of photochromic activating light by both PC¹ and PC² by competing with the compounds for light having the appropriate activating wavelength. If the light effector interferes with the photochromic light absorption of PC¹ to a greater extent than PC² the color may shift toward PC². Alternatively, the activated color may shift toward PC¹ if the light effector absorption interferes with the absorption of photochromic light by PC² to a greater extent than PC¹. In Fig. 37, Effector² is depicted as having an absorption within both the PC¹ and PC² absorption region.

In another embodiment, a light effector composition may interfere with the photochromic activity of the second photochromic compound (PC²). As illustrated in the equations below, the presence of a light effector composition (Effector³) may cause a shift in the equilibrium of PC² while having little or no effect on PC¹.



Such an effect may cause an increase or decrease in the concentration of PC² Colored produced when the lens is exposed to a photochromic activating light source. The equilibrium of the other photochromic compound PC¹ may not be significantly altered. In the above case, if the concentration of PC² Colored is, for example, decreased, the activated color of the lens may become shifted toward the activated color of PC¹. For example, if the activated color of a lens which includes PC¹ only is blue-green; with PC² only is red; and with both PC¹ and PC² is gray; the activated color of the lens may become more blue (e.g., shift from gray to green, green-blue, or blue) if the concentration of PC¹ Colored is decreased. It is theorized that such an effector may have an absorbance in a region of light similar to the PC Light² region. The effector may interfere with the absorption of photochromic activating light by PC² by competing with PC² for the light. PC¹ remains relatively unaffected by the light effector composition since its active photochromic activating light range differs significantly from the photochromic activating light range for PC². This is graphically illustrated in Fig. 37, where Effector³ is depicted as having an absorption within the PC Light² region. By competing with PC² for the photochromic activating light, Effector³ may cause a decrease in the amount of PC² Colored being produced.

While the above examples relate to the use of two photochromic compounds, light effector compositions may be used to effect the activated color of a lens which includes more than two photochromic compounds. The color changes for these systems may be more varied than described above, due to the variety of ranges in which the photochromic compounds absorb the photochromic activating light. For example, if three photochromic compounds are present, with activated colors of red, blue and green, a variety of colors may be produced depending on the interaction of the light effector composition with the photochromic activating light. The light effector may absorb the photochromic activating light such that the concentration of the colored form of two of the three photochromic compounds is reduced. The formed lens would then exhibit a color which is closest to the activated color of the non-effected photochromic compound. In the above example, a

lens with an activated color of substantially blue, red, or green may be obtained by the addition of a light effector. Alternatively, the light effector compound may reduce the concentration of the colored form of only one of the photochromic compounds. In the above example, the activated color of the lens may become yellow (from red and green,
5 with reduced amount of blue), green-blue (from green and blue, with reduced amount of red) or purple (from red and blue, with reduced amount of green). A full spectrum of activated colors may be produced by changing the composition of the light effector composition, without having to alter the ratio or chemical composition of the photochromic compounds.

10

It should also be understood that the light effector composition may include one or more light effector compounds. The use of multiple light effector compounds may allow the activated color of the lens to be further altered.

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In another embodiment, a photochromic activating light dye may be added to the lens forming composition to alter the activated color of a lens. The dye preferably exhibits a dye color when exposed to visible light. The dye color, however, is not significantly altered in the presence or absence of photochromic activating light. When mixed with a lens forming composition which includes at least one photochromic
20 compound the dye may alter the activated color of the lens, as well as the color of the lens in the absence of photochromic activating light.

In one embodiment, the dye may interfere with the photochromic activity of a photochromic compound. The activated color of a lens formed without the dye would
25 preferably change when the dye is added to the lens. The activated color of the lens may vary depending on the type of dye chosen. In one embodiment, the dye may interfere with the absorbance of photochromic activating light by the photochromic compound. This interference may lead to a reduced concentration of the colored form of the photochromic compound. The activated color of the lens may be a mixture of the dye

color and the photochromic color. For example, if a dye is blue and the photochromic compound is red, the lens may take on a purple color (i.e., a combination of the two colors).

5 It should be understood that the activated color of the lens may be significantly different than an activated color of a lens in which the photochromic compound is unaffected by the dye. When the absorption of photochromic activating light by the photochromic compound is unaffected by the dye, the intensity of the colored form of the photochromic compound may not be reduced. Thus, the activated color of the lens is
10 formed from a mixture of the dye color and the full intensity of the colored form of the photochromic compound. When the dye interferes with the photochromic activating light absorbance of the photochromic compound, the color of the lens is based on a combination of the dye and the reduced intensity of the colored form of the photochromic compound. The reduced intensity of the colored form of the photochromic compound
15 may cause the lens to have a color that is substantially different from the color produced when the unaffected colored form of the photochromic compound is mixed with the dye.

 While described above for one photochromic compound, it should be understood that the dye may have an effect on mixtures of photochromic compounds such that a full
20 spectrum of colors may be achieved. The selection of the appropriate dye based on the photochromic compounds present allows the color of the lenses to be altered without changing the ratio of the photochromic compounds.

 In an embodiment, a lens forming composition includes at least two photochromic
25 compounds. The photochromic compounds are preferably chosen to that have an activated color at opposite ends of the visible spectrum (e.g., blue and red). In one embodiment, the photochromic compounds may be Reversacol Berry Red (giving a red activated color) and Reversacol Sea Green (giving a blue-green color). The appropriate mixture of these two photochromic compounds gives the formed lens an activated color

of gray. The addition of effectors may cause the formed lens to have a wide variety of activated colors (e.g. red, orange, yellow, yellow green, green, aqua-green, blue, violet, purple, or brown). These changes in color may be accomplished without altering the ratio between the first and second photochromic compounds.

5

A lens forming composition based on the PRO-629 mixture of monomers may be used to develop photochromic lenses (See the section entitled "Lens Forming Compositions Including Ultraviolet/Visible Light Absorbing Materials"). The remainder of the lens forming composition preferably includes photoinitiators, co-initiators,
10 photochromic compounds. The amount of photochromic pigments present in the lens forming composition may widely range from about 1 ppm by weight to 5% by weight. In preferred compositions, the photochromic pigments are present in ranges from about 30 ppm to 2000 ppm. In the more preferred compositions, the photochromic pigments are present in ranges from about 150 ppm to 1000 ppm. The concentration may be adjusted
15 depending upon the thickness of the lens being produced to obtain optimal visible light absorption characteristics.

To alter the color of the active lens formed from this base composition a light effector composition may be added to the base composition. The light effector
20 composition preferably includes one or more light effectors. The light effector composition may be a pure composition of one or more light effectors. Alternatively, the light effectors may be diluted in a solution which has a composition similar to the base composition. The light effectors preferably include photochromic activating light absorbing compounds. More preferably, non-photochromic photochromic activating
25 light absorbing compounds are added to alter the activated color of the formed lens. Examples of light effectors include polymerization inhibitors (e.g., MEHQ), photoinitiators, co-initiators, fixed pigments and dyes, and hindered amine light stabilizers. All of these classes of compounds are described in greater detail in the previous section. After the light effector composition has been added, the amount of light

effectors present in the lens forming composition may widely range from about 1 ppm by weight to 5% by weight. In preferred compositions, the light effectors are present in ranges from about 30 ppm to 2000 ppm. In the more preferred compositions, the light effectors are present in ranges from about 150 ppm to 1000 ppm. The concentration may
5 be adjusted depending upon the thickness of the lens being produced to obtain optimal visible light absorption characteristics.

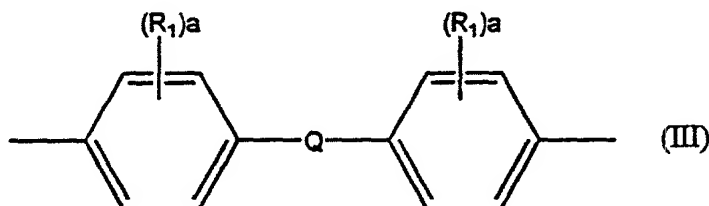
An advantage of the described composition is that the activated color of a lens may be altered without altering the ratio and or composition of the photochromic
10 compounds. By using a light effector composition, a single lens forming composition may be used as a base composition to which a light effector composition may be added in order to alter the activated color of the formed lens. The base composition may be supplied for use in the production of a variety of photochromic lenses. Along with the
15 base composition, a light effector composition, which includes one or more light effector compounds, may be included with the base composition. The light effector composition may be added to the base composition to alter the activated color of the formed lenses. In this manner, a single stock photochromic lens forming composition may be used to create photochromic lenses having a variety of activated colors.

20 In another embodiment, the base composition and at least two light effector compositions may be package together as a kit. The addition of the first light effector composition may alter the activated color of the formed lenses to produce a first color. The addition of the second light effector composition may alter the activated color of the formed lenses to produce a second color. Additional light effectors compositions may
25 also be included with the kit. The kit may allow a user to produce lens forming compositions which may be used to produce lens having a variety of activated colors by the addition of the appropriate light effector composition to the base composition.

4. Mid-Index Lens Forming Composition

or alkylidene having from 1 to about 4 carbon atoms; and the average value of n is in the range of from 0 to about 3. Preferably Q is methylethylidene, viz., isopropylidene.

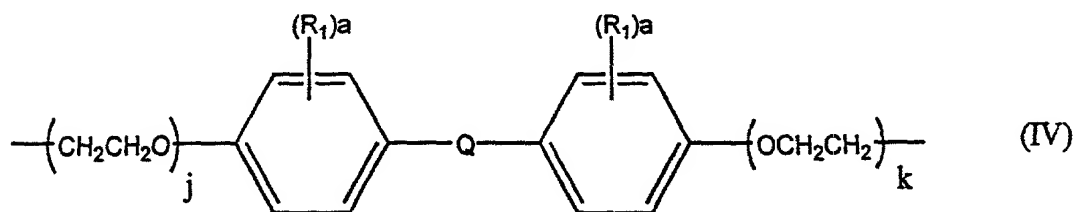
Preferably the value of n is zero, in which case A₁ is represented by formula (III):



in which each R₁, each a, and Q are as discussed with respect to Formula II. Preferably the two free bonds are both in the ortho or para positions. The para positions are especially preferred.

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In an embodiment, when para, para-bisphenols are chain extended with ethylene oxide, the central portion of the aromatic containing polyethylenic polyether functional monomer may be represented by the formula:



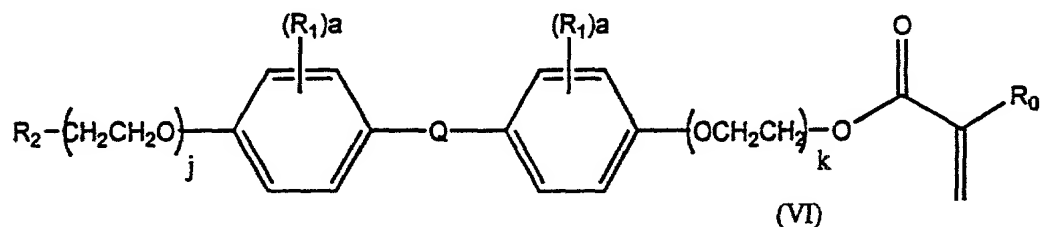
where each R₁, each a, and Q are as discussed with respect to Formula II, and the average values of j and k are each independently in the range of from about 1 to about 20.

20

In another embodiment, the polyethylenic functional monomer is an aromatic polyether polyethylenic functional monomer containing at least one group selected from acrylyl or methacrylyl. Preferably the aromatic polyether polyethylenic functional

monomer containing at least one group selected from acrylate and methacrylate has the general structure (VI), depicted below where R_0 is hydrogen or methyl, where each R_1 , each a , and Q are as discussed with respect to Formula II, where the values of j and k are each independently in the range of from about 1 to about 20, and where R_2 is a

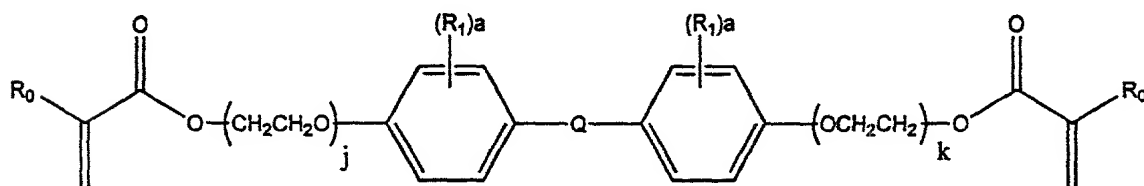
5 polymerizable unsaturated group (e.g., vinyl, allyl, allyl carbonate, methacrylyl, acrylyl, methacrylate, or acrylate).



10

In one embodiment, the aromatic containing polyether polyethylenic functional monomer is preferably an ethoxylated bisphenol A di(meth)acrylate. Ethoxylated bisphenol A di(meth)acrylates have the general structure depicted below where each R_0 is independently hydrogen or methyl, each R_1 , each a , and Q are as discussed with respect to

15 Formula II, and the values of j and k are each independently in the range of from about 1 to about 20.

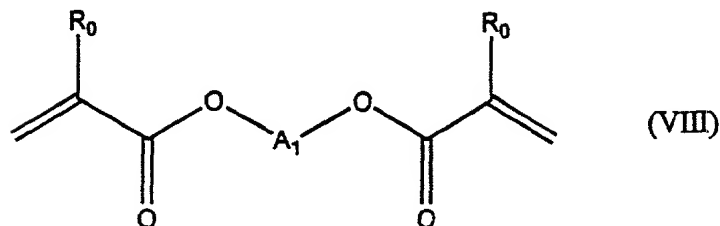
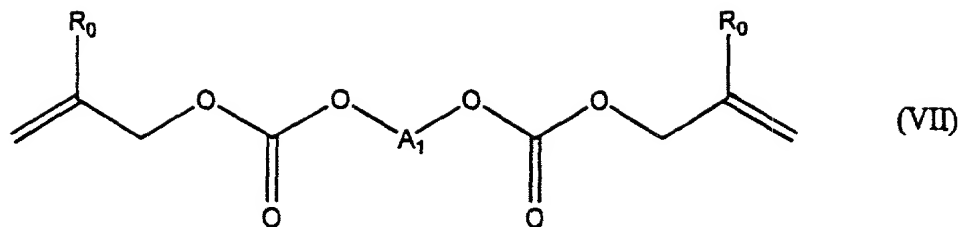


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Preferred ethoxylated bisphenol A dimethacrylates include ethoxylated 2 bisphenol A diacrylate (where $j + k = 2$, and R_0 is H), ethoxylated 2 bisphenol A

dimethacrylate (where $j + k = 2$, and R_0 is Me), ethoxylated 3 bisphenol A diacrylate (where $j + k = 3$, and R_0 is H), ethoxylated 4 bisphenol A diacrylate (where $j + k = 4$, and R_0 is H), ethoxylated 4 bisphenol A dimethacrylate (where $j + k = 4$, and R_0 is Me), ethoxylated 6 bisphenol A dimethacrylate (where $j + k = 6$, and R_0 is Me), ethoxylated 8 bisphenol A dimethacrylate (where $j + k = 8$, and R_0 is Me), ethoxylated 10 bisphenol A diacrylate (where $j + k = 10$, and R_0 is H), ethoxylated 10 bisphenol A dimethacrylate (where $j + k = 10$, and R_0 is Me), ethoxylated 30 bisphenol A diacrylate (where $j + k = 30$, and R_0 is H), ethoxylated 30 bisphenol A dimethacrylate (where $j + k = 30$, and R_0 is Me). These compounds are commercially available from Sartomer Company under the trade names PRO-631, SR-348, SR-349, SR-601, CD-540, CD-541, CD-542, SR-602, SR-480, SR-9038, and SR-9036 respectively. Other ethoxylated bisphenol A dimethacrylates include ethoxylated 3 bisphenol A dimethacrylate (where $j + k = 3$, and R_0 is Me), ethoxylated 6 bisphenol A diacrylate (where $j + k = 30$, and R_0 is H), and ethoxylated 8 bisphenol A diacrylate (where $j + k = 30$, and R_0 is H). In all of the above described compounds Q is $C(CH_3)_2$.

The monomer composition preferably may also include a polyethylenic functional monomer. Polyethylenic functional monomers are defined herein as organic molecules which include two or more polymerizable unsaturated groups. Common polymerizable unsaturated groups include vinyl, allyl, allyl carbonate, methacrylyl, acrylyl, methacrylate, and acrylate. Preferably, the polyethylenic functional monomers have the general formula (VII) or (VIII) depicted below, where each R_0 is independently hydrogen, halo, or a C_1 - C_4 alkyl group and where A_1 is as described above. It should be understood that while general structures (VII) and (VIII) are depicted as having only two polymerizable unsaturated groups, polyethylenic functional monomers having three (e.g., tri(meth)acrylates), four (e.g., tetra(meth)acrylates), five (e.g., penta(meth)acrylates), six (e.g., hexa(meth)acrylates) or more groups may be used.



Preferred polyethylenic functional monomers which may be combined with an
 5 aromatic containing polyethylenic polyether functional monomer to form the monomer
 composition include, but are not limited to, ethoxylated 2 bisphenol A dimethacrylate,
 tris(2-hydroxyethyl)isocyanurate triacrylate, ethoxylated 10 bisphenol A dimethacrylate,
 ethoxylated 4 bisphenol A dimethacrylate, dipentaerythritol pentaacrylate, 1,6-hexanediol
 dimethacrylate, isobornyl acrylate, pentaerythritol triacrylate, ethoxylated 6
 10 trimethylolpropane triacrylate, and bisphenol A bis allyl carbonate.

According to one embodiment, the liquid lens forming composition includes
 ethoxylated 4 bisphenol A dimethacrylate. Ethoxylated 4 bisphenol A dimethacrylate
 monomer, when cured to form an eyeglass lens, typically produces lenses that have a
 15 higher index of refraction than comparable lenses produced using DEG-BAC. Lenses
 formed from such a mid-index lens forming composition which includes ethoxylated 4
 bisphenol A dimethacrylate may have an index of refraction of about 1.56 compared to
 the PRO-629 compositions (previously described) which tend to have an index of
 refraction of about 1.51. A lens made from a higher index of refraction polymer may be
 20 thinner than a lens made from a lower index of refraction polymer because the differences
 in the radii of curvature between the front and back surface of the lens do not have to be

as great to produce a lens of a desired focal power. Lenses formed from a lens forming composition which includes ethoxylated 4 bisphenol A dimethacrylate may also be more rigid than lenses formed from PRO-629 based compositions.

5 The monomer composition may include additional monomers, which, when combined with ethoxylated 4 bisphenol A dimethacrylate, may modify the properties of the formed eyeglass lens and/or the lens forming composition. Tris(2-hydroxyethyl)isocyanurate triacrylate, available from Sartomer under the trade name SR-368, is a triacrylate monomer that may be included in the composition to provide
10 improved clarity, high temperature rigidity, and impact resistance properties to the finished lens. Ethoxylated 10 bisphenol A dimethacrylate, available from Sartomer under the trade name SR-480, is a diacrylate monomer that may be included in the composition to provide impact resistance properties to the finished lens. Ethoxylated 2 bisphenol A dimethacrylate, available from Sartomer under the trade name SR-348, is a diacrylate
15 monomer that may be included in the composition to provide tintability properties to the finished lens. Dipentaerythritol pentaacrylate, available from Sartomer under the trade name SR-399, is a pentaacrylate monomer that may be included in the composition to provide abrasion resistance properties to the finished lens. 1,6-hexanediol dimethacrylate, available from Sartomer under the trade name SR-239, is a diacrylate
20 monomer that may be included in the composition to reduce the viscosity of the lens forming composition. Isobornyl acrylate, available from Sartomer under the trade name SR-506, is an acrylate monomer that may be included in the composition to reduce the viscosity of the lens forming composition and enhance tinting characteristics. Bisphenol A bis allyl carbonate may be included in the composition to control the rate of reaction
25 during cure and also improve the shelf life of the lens forming composition. Pentaerythritol triacrylate, available from Sartomer under the trade name SR-444, is a triacrylate monomer that may be included in the composition to promote better adhesion of the lens forming composition to the molds during curing. Ethoxylated 6 trimethylolpropane triacrylate, available from Sartomer under the trade name SR-454,

may also be added.

Photoinitiators which may be used in the lens forming composition have been described in previous sections. In one embodiment, the photoinitiator composition preferably includes phenyl bis(2,4,6-trimethylbenzoyl) phosphine oxide (IRG-819) which is commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 819. The amount of Irgacure 819 present in a lens forming composition preferably ranges from about 30 ppm by weight to about 2000 ppm by weight. In another embodiment, the photoinitiator composition may include a mixture of photoinitiator. Preferably, a mixture of Irgacure 819 and 1-hydroxycyclohexylphenyl ketone, commercially available from Ciba Additives under the trade name of Irgacure 184 (IRG-184), is used. Preferably, the total amount of photoinitiators in the lens forming composition ranges from about 50 ppm to about 1000 ppm.

In another embodiment, an ophthalmic eyeglass lens may be made from lens forming composition comprising a monomer composition, a photoinitiator composition, and a co-initiator composition. The lens forming composition, in liquid form, is preferably placed in a mold cavity defined by a first mold member and a second mold member. It is believed that activating light which is directed toward the mold members to activate the photoinitiator composition causes the photoinitiator to form a polymer chain radical. The co-initiator may react with a fragment or an active species of either the photoinitiator or the polymer chain radical to produce a monomer initiating species. The polymer chain radical and the monomer initiating species may react with the monomer to cause polymerization of the lens forming composition.

The monomer composition preferably includes an aromatic containing polyethylenic polyether functional monomer having a structure as shown above. Preferably, the polyethylenic functional monomer is an aromatic polyether polyethylenic functional monomer containing at least one group selected from acrylyl or methacrylyl.

More preferably, the polyethylenic functional monomer is an ethoxylated bisphenol A di(meth)acrylate. The monomer composition may include a mixture of polyethylenic functional monomers, as described above. The photoinitiators which may be present in the lens forming composition have been described above.

5

The lens forming composition preferably includes a co-initiator composition. The co-initiator composition preferably includes amine co-initiators. Amines are defined herein as compounds of nitrogen formally derived from ammonia (NH₃) by replacement of the hydrogens of ammonia with organic substituents. Co-initiators include acrylyl
10 amine co-initiators commercially available from Sartomer Company under the trade names of CN-381, CN-383, CN-384, and CN-386, where these co-initiators are monoacrylyl amines, diacrylyl amines, or mixtures thereof. Other co-initiators include ethanolamines. Examples of ethanolamines include but are not limited to N-methyldiethanolamine (NMDEA) and triethanolamine (TEA) both commercially
15 available from Aldrich Chemicals. Aromatic amines (e.g., aniline derivatives) may also be used as co-initiators. Example of aromatic amines include, but are not limited to, ethyl-4-dimethylaminobenzoate (E-4-DMAB), ethyl-2-dimethylaminobenzoate (E-2-DMAB), n-butoxyethyl-4-dimethylaminobenzoate, *p*-dimethylaminobenzaldehyde, N, N-dimethyl-*p*-toluidine, and octyl-*p*-(dimethylamino)benzoate commercially available from
20 Aldrich Chemicals or The First Chemical Group of Pascagoula, Mississippi.

Preferably, acrylated amines are included in the co-initiator composition. Acrylyl amines may have the general structures depicted in Fig. 39, where R₀ is hydrogen or methyl, n and m are 1 to 20, preferably 1-4, and R₁ and R₂ are independently alkyl
25 containing from 1 to about 4 carbon atoms or phenyl. Monoacrylyl amines may include at least one acrylyl or methacrylyl group (see compounds (A) and (B) in FIG. 39). Diacrylyl amines may include two acrylyl, two methacrylyl, or a mixture of acrylyl or methacrylyl groups (see compounds (C) and (D) in FIG. 39). Acrylyl amines are commercially available from Sartomer Company under the trade names of CN-381, CN-

383, CN-384, and CN-386, where these co-initiators are monoacrylyl amines, diacrylyl amines, or mixtures thereof. Other acrylyl amines include dimethylaminoethyl methacrylate and dimethylaminoethyl acrylate both commercially available from Aldrich. In one embodiment, the co-initiator composition preferably includes a mixture of CN-
5 384 and CN-386. Preferably, the total amount of co-initiators in the lens forming composition ranges from about 50 ppm to about 7 % by weight.

An advantage to lens forming compositions which include a co-initiator is that less photoinitiator may be used to initiate curing of the lens forming composition.
10 Typically, plastic lenses are formed from a lens forming composition which includes a photoinitiator and a monomer. To improve the hardness of the formed lenses the concentration of photoinitiator may be increased. Increasing the concentration of photoinitiator, however, may cause increased yellowing of the formed lens, as has been described previously. To offset this increase in yellowing, a permanent dye may be
15 added to the lens forming composition. As the amount of yellowing is increased the amount of dye added may also be increased. Increasing the concentration of the dye may cause the light transmissibility of the lens to decrease.

A lens forming composition that includes a co-initiator may be used to reduce the
20 amount of photoinitiator used. To improve the hardness of the formed lenses a mixture of photoinitiator and co-initiator may be used to initiate curing of the monomer. The above-described co-initiators typically do not significantly contribute to the yellowing of the formed lens. By adding co-initiators to the lens forming composition, the amount of photoinitiator may be reduced. Reducing the amount of photoinitiator may decrease the
25 amount of yellowing in the formed lens. This allows the amount of dyes added to the lens forming composition to be reduced and light transmissibility of the formed lens may be improved without sacrificing the rigidity of the lens.

The lens forming composition may also include activating light absorbing compounds. These compounds may absorb at least a portion of the activating light which is directed toward the lens forming composition during curing. One example of activating light absorbing compounds are photochromic compounds. Photochromic compounds which may be added to the lens forming composition have been previously described. Preferably, the total amount of photochromic compounds in the lens forming composition ranges from about 1 ppm to about 1000 ppm. Examples of photochromic compounds which may be used in the lens forming composition include, but are not limited to Corn Yellow, Berry Red, Sea Green, Plum Red, Variacrol Yellow, Palatinate Purple, CH-94, Variacrol Blue D, Oxford Blue and CH-266. Preferably, a mixture of these compounds is used. Variacrol Yellow is a naphopyran material, commercially available from Great Lakes Chemical in West Lafayette, Indiana. Corn Yellow and Berry Red are naphopyrans and Sea Green, Plum Red and Palatinate Purple are spironaphthoxazine materials commercially available from Keystone Aniline Corporation in Chicago, Illinois. Variacrol Blue D and Oxford Blue are spironaphthoxazine materials, commercially available from Great Lakes Chemical in West Lafayette, Indiana. CH-94 and CH-266 are benzopyran materials, commercially available from Chroma Chemicals in Dayton, Ohio. The composition of a Photochromic Dye Mixture which may be added to the lens forming composition is described in Table 1.

Photochromic Dye Mixture

Corn Yellow	22.3 %
Berry Red	19.7 %
Sea Green	14.8 %
Plum Red	14.0 %
Variacrol Yellow	9.7 %
Palatinate Purple	7.6 %
CH-94	4.0 %
Variacrol Blue D	3.7 %
Oxford Blue	2.6 %
CH-266	1.6 %

Table 1

5

The lens forming composition may also other activating light absorbing compounds such as UV stabilizers, UV absorbers, and dyes. UV stabilizers, such as Tinuvin 770 may be added to reduce the rate of degradation of the formed lens caused by exposure to ultraviolet light. UV absorbers, such as 2-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-4-(1,1,3,3,-
10 tetramethylbutyl)phenol, may be added to the composition to provide UV blocking characteristics to the formed lens. Small amounts of dyes, such as Thermoplast Blue 684 and Thermoplast Red from BASF may be added to the lens forming composition to counteract yellowing. These classes of compounds have been described in greater detail in previous sections.

15

In an embodiment, a UV absorbing composition may be added to the lens forming composition. The UV absorbing composition preferably includes a photoinitiator and a UV absorber. Photoinitiators and UV absorbers have been described in greater detail in previous sections. Typically, the concentration of UV absorber in the lens forming

composition required to achieve desirable UV blocking characteristics is in the range from about 0.1 to about 0.25 % by weight. For example, 2-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-4-(1,1,3,3,-tetramethylbutyl)phenol may be added to the lens forming composition as a UV absorber at a concentration of about 0.17 %.

5

By mixing a photoinitiator with a UV absorbing compound the combined concentration of the photoinitiator and the UV absorber required to achieve the desired UV blocking characteristics in the formed lens may be lower than the concentration of UV absorber required if used alone. For example, 2-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-4-(1,1,3,3,-tetramethylbutyl)phenol may be added to the lens forming composition as a UV absorber at a concentration of about 0.17 % to achieve the desired UV blocking characteristics for the formed lens. Alternatively, a UV absorbing composition may be formed by a combination of 2-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-4-(1,1,3,3,-tetramethylbutyl)phenol with the photoinitiator 2-isopropyl-thioxanthone (ITX), commercially available from Aceto Chemical in Flushing, New York. To achieve similar UV blocking characteristics in the formed lens, significantly less of the UV absorbing composition may be added to the lens forming composition, compared to the amount of UV absorber used by itself. For example, 2-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-4-(1,1,3,3,-tetramethylbutyl)phenol at a concentration of about 700 ppm, with respect to the lens forming composition, along with 150 ppm of the photoinitiator 2-isopropyl-thioxanthone (2-ITX) may be used to provide UV blocking characteristics. Thus, a significant reduction, (e.g., from 0.15 % down to less than about 1000 ppm), in the concentration of UV absorber may be achieved, without a reduction in the UV blocking ability of the subsequently formed lens. An advantage of lowering the amount of UV absorbing compounds present in the lens forming composition is that the solubility of the various components of the composition may be improved.

Tables 2-6 list some examples of mid-index lens forming compositions. The UV absorber is 2-(2H-benzotriazol-2-yl)-4-(1,1,3,3-tetramethylbutyl)phenol.

Ingredient	Formula 1	Formula 2	Formula 3	Formula 4	Formula 5	Formula 6
Irgacure 819	694.2 ppm	486 ppm	480 ppm	382 ppm	375 ppm	414 ppm
Irgacure 184						
CN 384	0.962 %	0.674%	0.757%	0.62%	0.61%	0.66%
CN386	0.962 %	0.674 %	0.757 %	0.62 %	0.61 %	0.66 %
SR-348	97.98 %	68.65 %	98.2 %	81.2 %	79.6 %	86.4 %
SR-368						
SR-480		29.95 %				
CD-540						
SR-399						
SR-239					2.0 %	2.08 %
SR-506						
CR-73				17.2 %	16.9 %	10.0 %
PRO-629						
Tinuvin 770			290 ppm			
UV Absorber			0.173 %			
Thermoplast Blue	0.534 ppm	0.374 ppm	0.6 ppm	0.5 ppm	4.5 ppm	4.58 ppm
Thermoplast Red	0.019 ppm	0.0133 ppm	0.015 ppm	0.012 ppm	0.58 ppm	0.58 ppm
Mineral Oil			136 ppm			65 ppm
Photochromic Dye Mixture					470 ppm	507 ppm

5

Table 2

Ingredient	Formula 7	Formula 8	Formula 9	Formula 10	Formula 11	Formula 12
Irgacure 819	531.2 ppm	462 ppm	565.9 ppm	226 ppm	443 ppm	294 ppm
Irgacure 184	18.7 ppm			144 ppm		
CN 384	0.77 %	0.887 %	0.78%	0.40%	0.61%	
CN386	0.77 %	0.887 %	0.78 %	0.53 %	0.61 %	
SR-348	72.4 %	70.36 %	58.20 %	41.5 %	88.70 %	
SR-368	24.1 %	23.87 %	21.4 %	7.0 %		
SR-480						
CD-540			18.7 %	0.74 %		97.76 %
SR-399				46.8 %		
SR-239	1.86 %	3.65 %	20.1 %			2.00 %
SR-506					10.0 %	
CR-73			20.1 %	2.9 %		
PRO-629	0.05 %					
Tinuvin 770						
UV Absorber						
Thermoplast Blue	0.567 ppm	3.62 ppm	0.70 ppm	0.255 ppm	0.6 ppm	4.3 ppm
Thermoplast Red	0.0147 ppm	0.576 ppm	0.014 ppm	0.006 ppm	0.028 ppm	0.24 ppm
Photochromic Dye Mixture		450 ppm				

Table 3

Ingredient	Formula 13	Formula 14	Formula 15	Formula 16	Formula 17	Formula 18
Irgacure 819	760 ppm	620 ppm	289 ppm		105 ppm	343 ppm
Irgacure 184						
CN 384		0.73 %	0.34 %			0.475 %
CN 386		0.73 %	0.34 %	1.00 %	0.70 %	0.475 %
2-ITX					188 ppm	141 ppm
SR-348				89.00%	92.00 %	98.90 %
SR-368						
SR-480						
CD-540	97.57 %	96.20 %	99.28 %		0.34 %	
SR-399						
SR-239	2.30 %	2.30 %	0.01 %			
SR-506						
SR-444						
SR-454				10.00 %	6.9 %	
CR-73						
PRO-629						
Tinuvin 770						
UV Absorber						785 ppm
Thermoplast Blue	4.9 ppm	5.1 ppm	0.508 ppm		0.35 ppm	0.69 ppm
Thermoplast Red	0.276 ppm	0.285 ppm	0.022 ppm		0.002 ppm	0.034 ppm
Diethyl-phthalate						125 ppm
Butyl stearate						
Photochromic Dye Mixture	499 ppm					

Table 4

Ingredient	Formula 19	Formula 20	Formula 21	Formula 22	Formula 23	Formula 24
Irgacure 819	490 ppm	635 ppm	610 ppm	735 ppm	320 ppm	600 ppm
Irgacure 184						
CN 384	0.680 %	0.746 %	0.705 %	0.60%		
CN 386	0.680 %	0.746 %	0.705 %	0.60%		
2-ITX						
SR-348	69.30 %					68.60 %
SR-368					74.0 %	22.10 %
SR-480						
CD-540		98.45 %	92.60 %	98.50 %	1.0 %	1.97 %
SR-399						
SR-239		0.01 %	3.86 %	0.16 %		
SR-506				0.10%		
SR-444	29.30 %					
SR-454					25.0 %	7.40 %
CR-73						
PRO-629		0.007 %	2.06 %			
Tinuvin 770						
UV Absorber						
Thermoplast Blue	0.37 ppm	0.507 ppm	3.07 ppm	4.3 ppm	0.15 ppm	0.29 ppm
Thermoplast Red	0.013 ppm	0.0126 ppm	0.336 ppm	0.41 ppm	0.006 ppm	0.012 ppm
Diocetyl- phthalate						
Butyl stearate						
Photochromic Dye Mixture			442 ppm	497 ppm		

Ingredient	Formula 25	Formula 26	Formula 27	Formula 28	Formula 29	Formula 30	Formula 31
Irgacure 819	650 ppm	464 ppm	557 ppm	448 ppm	460 ppm		
Irgacure 184							300 ppm
CN 384	0.650 %	0.70 %					
CN 386	0.650 %	0.70 %					
2-ITX						600 ppm	120 ppm
SR-348		39.10 %					
SR-368		13.00 %		19.60 %	20.70 %		
SR-480					10.70 %		
CD-540	88.96 %	41.90 %	1.60 %	1.30 %		99.94 %	99.96%
SR-399							
SR-239							
SR-506			98.30 %	79.00 %	67.24 %		
SR-444	9.70 %	4.60 %					
SR-454							
CR-73							
PRO-629							
Tinuvin 770							
UV Absorber							
Thermoplast Blue	0.566 ppm	0.52 ppm	0.24 ppm	0.19 ppm	0.467 ppm		
Thermoplast Red	0.02 ppm	0.013 ppm	0.01 ppm	0.008 ppm	0.024 ppm		
Diocetyl- phthalate							
Butyl stearate	75 ppm	35 ppm					
Photochromic Dye Mixture							

In one embodiment, plastic lenses may be formed by disposing a mid-index lens forming composition into the mold cavity of a mold assembly and irradiating the mold assembly with activating light. Coating materials may be applied to the mold members prior to filling the mold cavity with the lens forming composition.

5

After filing the mold cavity of the mold assembly the mold assembly is preferably placed in the lens curing unit and subjected to activating light. Preferably, actinic light is used to irradiate the mold assembly. A clear polycarbonate plate may be placed between the mold assembly and the activating light source. The polycarbonate plate preferably
10 isolates the mold assembly from the lamp chamber, thus preventing airflow from the lamp cooling fans from interacting with the mold assemblies. The activating light source may be configured to deliver from about 0.1 to about 10 milliwatts/cm² to at least one non-casting face, preferably both non-casting faces, of the mold assembly. Depending on the components of the lens forming composition used the intensity of activating light
15 used may be <1 milliwatt/cm². The intensity of incident light at the plane of the lens curing unit drawer is measured using an International Light IL-1400 radiometer equipped with an XRL140A detector head. This particular radiometer preferably has a peak detection wavelength at about 400 nm, with a detection range from about 310 nm to about 495 nm. The International Light IL-1400 radiometer and the XRL140A detector
20 head are both commercially available International Light, Incorporated of Newburyport, Massachusetts.

After the mold assembly is placed within the lens curing unit, the mold assemblies are preferably irradiated with activating light continuously for 30 seconds to thirty
25 minutes, more preferably from one minute to five minutes. Preferably, the mold assemblies irradiated in the absence of a cooling air stream. After irradiation, the mold assemblies were removed from the lens curing unit and the formed lens demolded. The lenses may be subjected to a post-cure treatment in the post-cure unit.

In general, it was found that the use of a photoinitiator (e.g., IRG-819 and IRG-184) in the lens forming composition produces lenses with better characteristics than lens formed using a co-initiator only. For example, formula 15, described in the Table 4, includes a monomer composition (a mixture of SR-348 and SR-454) and a co-initiator (CN-386). When this lens forming composition was exposed to activating light for 15 min. there was no significant reaction or gel formation. It is believed that the co-initiator requires an initiating species in order to catalyze curing of the monomer composition. Typically this initiating species is produced from the reaction of the photoinitiator with activating light.

10

A variety of photoinitiators and photoinitiators combined with co-initiators may be used to initiate polymerization of the monomer composition. One initiator system which may be used includes photoinitiators IRG-819 and 2-ITX and a co-initiator, see Formulas 17-18. Such a system is highly efficient at initiating polymerization reactions.

15 The efficiency of a polymerization catalyst is a measurement of the amount of photoinitiator required to initiate a polymerization reaction. A relatively small amount of an efficient photoinitiator may be required to catalyze a polymerization reaction, whereas a greater amount of a less efficient photoinitiator may be required to catalyze the polymerization reaction. The IRG-819/2-ITX/co-initiator system may be used to cure lenses forming compositions which include a UV absorbing compound. This initiator system may also be used to form colored lenses.

An initiator system that is less efficient than the IRG-819/2-ITX/co-initiator system includes a mixture of the photoinitiators IRG-819 and 2-ITX, see Formula 31. This system is less efficient at initiating polymerization of lens forming compositions than the IRG-819/2-ITX/co-initiator system. The IRG-819/2-ITX system may be used to cure very reactive monomer compositions. An initiator system having a similar efficiency to the IRG-819/2-ITX system includes a mixture of IRG-819 and co-initiator, see Formulas 1-6, 8-9, 11, 14-15, 19-22, and 25-26. The IRG-819/co-initiator system

may be used to cure clear lenses which do not include a UV blocking compound and photochromic lens forming compositions.

Another initiator system which may be used includes the photoinitiator 2-ITX and
5 a co-initiator. This initiator system is much less efficient at initiating polymerization reactions than the IRG-819/co-initiator system. The 2-ITX/co-initiator system is preferably used for curing monomer compositions which include highly reactive monomers.

10 The use of the above described mid-index lens forming compositions may minimize or eliminate a number of problems associated with activating light curing of lenses. One problem typical of curing eyeglass lenses with activating light is pre-release. Pre-release may be caused by a number of factors. If the adhesion between the mold
15 faces and the shrinking lens forming composition is not sufficient, pre-release may occur. The propensity of a lens forming composition to adhere to the mold face, in combination with its shrinkage, determine how the process variables are controlled to avoid pre-release. Adhesion is affected by such factors as geometry of the mold face (e.g., high-add flat-top bifocals tend to release because of the sharp change in cavity height at the
20 segment line), the temperature of the mold assembly, and the characteristics of the in-mold coating material. The process variables which are typically varied to control pre-release include the application of cooling fluid to remove exothermic heat, controlling the rate of heat generation by manipulating the intensities and timing of the activating radiation, providing differential light distribution across the thin or thick sections of the mold cavity manipulating the thickness of the molds, and providing in-mold coatings
25 which enhance adhesion. An advantage of the above described mid-index lens forming compositions is that the composition appears to have enhanced adhesion characteristics. This may allow acceptable lenses to be produced over a greater variety of curing conditions. Another advantage is that higher diopter lenses may be produced at relatively low pre-release rates, broadening the achievable prescription range.

Another advantage of the above described mid-index lens forming compositions is that they tend to minimize problems associated with dripping during low intensity curing of lenses (e.g., in the 1 to 6 milliwatt range). Typically, during the irradiation of the lens forming composition with activating light, small amounts of monomer may be squeezed out of the cavity and run onto the non-casting faces of the molds. Alternatively, during filling of the mold assembly with the lens forming composition, a portion of the lens forming composition may drip onto the non-casting faces of the mold assembly. This "dripping" onto the non-casting faces of the mold assembly tends to cause the activating light to focus more strongly in the regions of the cavity located underneath the drippings. This focusing of the activating light may affect the rate of curing. If the rate of curing underneath the drippings varies significantly from the rate of curing throughout the rest of the lens forming composition, optical distortions may be created in the regions below the drippings.

It is believed that differences in the rate of gelation between the center and the edge regions of the lens forming composition may cause dripping to occur. During the curing of a lens forming composition, the material within the mold cavity tends to swell slightly during the gel phase of the curing process. If there is enough residual monomer around the gasket lip, this liquid will tend to be forced out of the cavity and onto the non-casting faces of the mold. This problem tends to be minimized when the lens forming composition undergoes fast, uniform gelation. Typically, a fast uniform gelation of the lens forming composition may be achieved by manipulating the timing, intensities, and distribution of the activating radiation. The above described mid-index lens forming compositions, however, tend to gel quickly and uniformly under a variety of curing conditions, thus minimizing the problems caused by dripping.

Another advantage of the above described mid-index lens forming compositions is that the compositions tend to undergo uniform curing under a variety of curing

conditions. This uniform curing tends to minimize optical aberrations within the formed lens. This is especially evident during the formation of high plus power flattop lenses which tend to exhibit optical distortions after the lens forming composition is cured. It is believed that the activating radiation may be reflected off of the segment line and create
5 local differences in the rate of gelation in the regions of the lens forming composition that the reflected light reaches. The above described mid-index lens forming compositions tend to show less optical distortions caused by variations of the intensity of activating radiation throughout the composition.

10 Other advantages include drier edges and increased rigidity of the formed lens. An advantage of drier edges is that the contamination of the optical faces of the lens by uncured or partially cured lens forming composition is minimized.

METHODS OF FORMING PLASTIC LENSES

15 Plastic lenses may be formed by disposing a lens forming composition into the mold cavity of a mold assembly and irradiating the mold assembly with activating light. Coating materials may be applied to the mold members prior to filling the mold cavity with the lens forming composition. The lens may be treated in a post-cure unit after the
20 lens-curing process is completed.

The operation of the above described system to provide plastic lenses involves a number of operations. These operations are preferably coordinated by the controller 50, which has been described above. After powering the system, an operator is preferably
25 signaled by the controller to enter the prescription of the lens, the type of lens, and the type of coating materials for the lens. Based on these inputted values the controller will preferably indicate to the operator which molds and gaskets will be required to form the particular lens.

After obtaining the appropriate mold members the mold members are preferably cleaned prior to loading with a lens forming composition. The inner surface (i.e., casting surface) of the mold members may be cleaned on a spin coating unit 20 by spraying the mold members with a cleaning solution while spinning the mold members. Examples of cleaning solutions include methanol, ethanol, isopropyl alcohol, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, or a water based detergent cleaner. Preferably, a cleaning solution which includes isopropyl alcohol is used to clean the mold members. As the mold member is contacted with the cleaning solution, dust and dirt may be removed and transferred into the underlying dish 115 of the curing unit. After a sufficient amount of cleaning solution has been applied the mold members may be dried by continued spinning without the application of cleaning solution.

In an embodiment, the inner surface, i.e., the casting face, of the front mold member may be coated with one or more hardcoat layers before the lens forming composition is placed within the mold cavity. Preferably, two hardcoat layers are used so that any imperfections, such as pin holes in the first hardcoat layer, are covered by the second hardcoat layer. The resulting double hardcoat layer is preferably scratch resistant and protects the subsequently formed eyeglass lens to which the double hardcoat layer adheres. The hardcoat layers are preferably applied using a spin coating unit 20. The mold member is preferably placed in the spin coating unit and the coating material applied to the mold while spinning at high speeds (e.g., between about 900 to 1000 RPM). After a sufficient amount of coating material has been applied, the coating material may be cured by the activating light source disposed in the cover. The cover is preferably closed and activating light is preferably applied to the mold member while the mold member is spinning at relatively low speeds (e.g., between about 150 to 250 RPM). Preferably control of the spinning and the application of activating light is performed by controller 50. Controller 50 is preferably configured to prompt the operator to place the mold members on the coating unit, apply the coating material to the mold member, and close the cover to initiate curing of the coating material.

In an embodiment, the eyeglass lens that is formed may be coated with a hydrophobic layer, e.g. a hardcoat layer. The hydrophobic layer preferably extends the life of the photochromic pigments near the surfaces of the lens by preventing water and oxygen molecules from degrading the photochromic pigments.

In a preferred embodiment, both mold members may be coated with a cured adhesion-promoting composition prior to placing the lens forming composition into the mold cavity. Providing the mold members with such an adhesion-promoting composition is preferred to increase the adhesion between the casting surface of the mold and the lens forming composition. The adhesion-promoting composition thus reduces the possibility of premature release of the lens from the mold. Further, it is believed that such a coating also provides an oxygen and moisture barrier on the lens which serves to protect the photochromic pigments near the surface of the lens from oxygen and moisture degradation. Yet further, the coating provides abrasion resistance, chemical resistance, and improved cosmetics to the finished lens.

In an embodiment, the casting face of the back mold member may be coated with a material that is capable of being tinted with dye prior to filling the mold cavity with the lens forming composition. This tintable coat preferably adheres to the lens forming composition so that dyes may later be added to the resulting eyeglass lens for tinting the lens. The tintable coat may be applied using the spin coating unit as described above.

The controller may prompt the user to obtain the appropriate lens forming composition. In one embodiment, the controller will inform the user of which chemicals and the amounts of each chemical that is required to prepare the lens forming composition. Alternatively, the lens forming compositions may be preformed. In this case the controller may indicate to the operator which of the preformed lens forming compositions should be used.

In an embodiment, dyes may be added to the lens forming composition. It is believed that certain dyes may be used to attack and encapsulate ambient oxygen so that the oxygen may be inhibited from reacting with free radicals formed during the curing process. Also, dyes may be added to the composition to alter the color of an unactivated photochromic lens. For instance, a yellow color that sometimes results after a lens is formed may be "hidden" if a blue-red or blue-pink dye is present in the lens forming composition. The unactivated color of a photochromic lens may also be adjusted by the addition of non-photochromic pigments to the lens forming composition.

10

In a preferred technique for filling the lens molding cavity 382 (see Fig. 11), the annular gasket 380 is placed on a concave or front mold member 392 and a convex or back mold member 390 is moved into place. The annular gasket 380 is preferably pulled away from the edge of the back mold member 390 at the uppermost point and a lens forming composition is preferably injected into the lens molding cavity 382 until a small amount of the lens forming composition is forced out around the edge. The excess is then removed, preferably, by vacuum. Excess liquid that is not removed could spill over the face of the back mold member 390 and cause optical distortion in the finished lens.

15

The mold assembly, with a lens forming composition disposed within the mold cavity, is preferably placed within the lens curing unit. Curing of the lens forming composition is preferably initiated by the controller after the lens curing unit door is closed. The curing conditions are preferably set by the controller based on the prescription and type of lens being formed.

20

25

After the curing cycle has been completed. The controller preferably prompts the user to remove the mold assembly from the lens curing unit. In an embodiment, the cured lens may be removed from the mold apparatus. The cured lens may be complete at this stage and ready for use.

In another embodiment, the cured lens may require a post cure treatment. After the lens is removed from the mold apparatus the edges of the lens may be dried and scraped to remove any uncured lens forming composition near the edges. The controller
5 may prompt the user to place the partially cured lens into a post-cure unit. After the lens has been placed within the post-cure unit the controller may apply light and/or heat to the lens to complete the curing of the lens. In an embodiment, partially cured lenses may be heated to about 115 °C while being irradiated with activating light. This post-treatment may be applied for about 5 minutes.

10

When casting a lens, particularly a positive lens that is thick in the center, cracking may be a problem. Addition polymerization reactions, including photochemical addition polymerization reactions, may be exothermic. During the process, a large temperature gradient may build up and the resulting stress may cause the lens to crack.
15 Yellowing of the finished lens may also be a problem. Yellowing tends to be related to the monomer composition, the identity of the photoinitiator, and the concentration of the photoinitiator.

The formation of optical distortions usually occurs during the early stages of the polymerization reaction during the transformation of the lens forming composition from the liquid to the gel state. Once patterns leading to optical distortions form they may be difficult to eliminate. When gelation occurs there typically is a rapid temperature rise. The exothermic polymerization step causes a temperature increase, which in turn causes an increase in the rate of polymerization, which causes a further increase in temperature.
20 If the heat exchange with the surroundings is not sufficient to cool the lens, there will be a runaway situation that leads to premature release, the appearance of thermally caused striations and even breakage.
25

Accordingly, when continuous activating light is applied, it is preferred that the

reaction process be smooth and not too fast but not too slow. Heat is preferably not generated by the process so fast that it may not be exchanged with the surroundings. The incident activating light intensity is preferably adjusted to allow the reaction to proceed at a desired rate. It is also preferred that the seal between the annular gasket 380 and the
5 opposed mold members 378 be as complete as possible.

Factors that have been found to lead to the production of lenses that are free from optical distortions may be (1) achieving a good seal between the annular gasket 380 and the opposed mold members 378; (2) using mold members 378 having surfaces that are
10 free from defects; (3) using a formulation having an appropriate type and concentration of photoinitiator that will produce a reasonable rate of temperature rise; and (4) using a homogeneous formulation. Preferably, these conditions are optimized.

Premature release of the lens from the mold will result in an incompletely cured
15 lens and the production of lens defects. Factors that contribute to premature release may be (1) a poorly assembled mold assembly 352; (2) the presence of air bubbles around the sample edges; (3) imperfection in gasket lip or mold edge; (4) inappropriate formulation; (5) uncontrolled temperature rise; and (6) high or non-uniform shrinkage. Preferably, these conditions are minimized.

20 Premature release may also occur when the opposed mold members 378 are held too rigidly by the annular gasket 380. Preferably, there is sufficient flexibility in the annular gasket 380 to permit the opposed mold members 378 to follow the lens as it shrinks. Indeed, the lens must be allowed to shrink in diameter slightly as well as in
25 thickness. The use of an annular gasket 380 that has a reduced degree of stickiness with the lens during and after curing is therefore desirable.

Despite the above problems, the advantages offered by the radiation cured lens molding system clearly outweigh the disadvantages. The advantages of a radiation cured

system include a significant reduction in energy requirements, curing time and other problems normally associated with conventional thermal systems.

1. Method of Forming a Plastic Lens by Curing with Activating Light.

5

In one embodiment, plastic lenses may be formed by disposing a lens forming composition into the mold cavity of a mold assembly and irradiating the mold assembly with activating light. Coating materials may be applied to the mold members prior to filling the mold cavity with the lens forming composition. The lens may be treated in a post-cure unit after the lens-curing process is completed.

10

The lens forming composition is preferably prepared according to the following protocol. Appropriate amounts of HDDMA, TTEGDA, TMPTA and TRPGDA are mixed and stirred thoroughly, preferably with a glass rod. The acrylate/methacrylate mixture may then be passed through a purification column.

15

A suitable purification column may be disposed within a glass column having a fitted glass disk above a Teflon stopcock and having a top reservoir with a capacity of approximately 500 ml and a body with a diameter of 22 mm and a length of about 47 cm. The column may be prepared by placing on the fitted glass disk approximately 35 g. of activated alumina (basic), available from ALFA Products, Johnson Matthey, Danvers, MA in a 60 mesh form or from Aldrich in a 150 mesh form. Approximately 10 g. of an inhibitor remover (hydroquinone/methylester remover) available as HR-4 from Scientific Polymer Products, Inc., Ontario, NY then may be placed on top of the alumina and, finally, approximately 35 g. of activated alumina (basic) may be placed on top of the inhibitor remover.

20

25

Approximately 600 g. of the acrylate/methacrylate mixture may then be added above the column packing. An overpressure of 2-3 psi may then be applied to the top of

the column resulting in a flow rate of approximately 30 to 38 grams per hour. Parafilm may be used to cover the junction of the column tip and the receiving bottle to prevent the infiltration of dust and water vapor. The acrylate/methacrylate mixture, preferably, may be received in a container that is opaque to activating light.

5

An appropriate amount of bisphenol A bis(allyl carbonate) may then be added to the acrylate/methacrylate mixture to prepare the final monomer mixture.

10 An appropriate amount of a photoinitiator may then be added to the final monomer mixture. The final monomer mixture, with or without photoinitiator, may then be stored in a container that is opaque to activating light.

An appropriate amount of a dye may also be added to the final monomer mixture, with or without photoinitiator.

15

After filling the mold cavity with the lens forming composition, the mold assembly is preferably irradiated with activating light. In one embodiment, the lamps generate an intensity at the lamp surface of approximately 4.0 to 7.0 mW/cm² of ultraviolet light having wavelengths between 300 and 400 nm, which light is very
20 uniformly distributed without any sharp discontinuities throughout the reaction process. Such bulbs are commercially available from Sylvania under the trade designation Sylvania Fluorescent (F15T8/2052) or Sylvania Fluorescent (F15T8/350BL/18") GTE. Activating light having wavelengths between 300 and 400 nm is preferred because the photoinitiators preferably absorb most efficiently at this wavelength and the mold
25 members 378, preferably, allow maximum transmission at this wavelength. It is preferred that there be no sharp intensity gradients of activating light either horizontally or vertically through the lens composition during the curing process. Sharp intensity gradients through the lens may lead to defects in the finished lens.

10 If lenses are produced with continuous activating light without any mold cooling, the temperature of the mold-lens assembly may rise to above 50°C. Low diopter lenses may be prepared in this fashion, but higher plus or minus diopter lenses may fail. Certain lenses may be made by controlling (e.g., cooling) the temperature of the lens material
5 during cure with circulating uncooled fluid (i.e., fluid at ambient temperatures). The ambient fluid in these systems is preferably directed towards the mold members in the same manner as described above. Circulating ambient temperature fluid permits manufacture of a wider range of prescriptions than manufacture of the lenses without any mold cooling at all.

10

Many polymerization factors may be interrelated. The ideal temperature of polymerization is typically related to the diopter and thickness of the lens being cast. Lower temperatures (below about 10°C) are preferred to cast higher + or - diopter lenses when using continuous activating light. These lower temperatures tend to permit an
15 increase in photoinitiator concentration, which in turn may speed up the reaction and lower curing time.

Preventing premature release when using continuous activating light may also be somewhat dependent upon the flow rates of cooling fluid, as well as its temperature. For
20 instance, if the temperature of the cooling fluid is decreased it may also be possible to decrease the flowrate of cooling fluid. Similarly, the disadvantages of a higher temperature cooling fluid may be somewhat offset by higher flow rates of cooling fluid.

In one embodiment the air flow rates for a dual distributor system (i.e., an air
25 distributor above and below the lens composition) are about 1-30 standard cubic feet ("scf") (about 0.028 - 0.850 standard cubic meters, "scm") per minute per distributor, more preferably about 4-20 scf (about 0.113-0.566 scm) per minute per distributor, and more preferably still about 9-15 scf (about 0.255-0.423 scm) per minute per distributor. "Standard conditions," as used herein, means 60 °F (about 15.5 °C) and one atmosphere

pressure (about 101 kilopascals).

5 The thickness of the glass molds used to cast polymerized lenses may affect the lenses produced. A thinner mold tends to allow more efficient heat transfer between the polymerizing material and the cooling air, thus reducing the rate of premature release. In addition, a thinner mold tends to exhibit a greater propensity to flex. A thinner mold tends to flex during the relatively rapid differential shrinkage between the thick and thin portions of a polymerized lens, again reducing the incidence of premature release. In one embodiment the first or second mold members have a thickness less than about 5.0 mm, 10 preferably about 1.0-5.0 mm, more preferably about 2.0-4.0 mm, and more still about 2.5-3.5 mm.

"Front" mold or face means the mold or face whose surface ultimately forms the surface of an eyeglass lens that is furthest from the eye of an eyeglass lens wearer. 15 "Back" mold or face means the mold or face whose surface ultimately forms the surface of an eyeglass lens that is closest to the eye of an eyeglass lens wearer.

In one embodiment, the lens forming material is preferably cured to form a solid lens at relatively low temperatures, relatively low continuous activating light intensity, 20 and relatively low photoinitiator concentrations. Lenses produced as such generally have a Shore D hardness of about 60-78 (for preferred compositions) when cured for about 15 minutes as described above. The hardness may be improved to about 80-81 Shore D by postcure heating the lens in a conventional oven for about 10 minutes, as described above.

25

The activating light cured lenses may demonstrate excellent organic solvent resistance to acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, and alcohols.

2. Preparing Lenses of Various Powers By Altering the Lens Forming Conditons.

It has been determined that in some embodiments the finished power of an activating light polymerized lens may be controlled by manipulating the curing temperature of the lens forming composition. For instance, for an identical combination of mold members and gasket, the focusing power of the produced lens may be increased or decreased by changing the intensity of activating light across the lens mold cavity or the faces of the opposed mold members.

As the lens forming material begins to cure, it passes through a gel state, the pattern of which, within the mold assembly, leads to the proper distribution of internal stresses generated later in the cure when the lens forming material begins to shrink. As the lens forming material shrinks during the cure, the opposed mold members will preferably flex as a result of the different amounts of shrinkage between the relatively thick and the relatively thin portions of the lens. When a negative lens, for example, is cured, the upper or back mold member will preferably flatten and the lower or front mold member will preferably steepen with most of the flexing occurring in the lower or front mold member. Conversely, with a positive lens, the upper or back mold member will preferably steepen and the lower or front mold member will preferably flatten with most of the flexing occurring in the upper or back mold member.

By varying the intensity of the activating light between the relatively thin and the relatively thick portions of the lens in the lens forming cavity, it is possible to create more or less total flexing. Those light conditions which result in less flexing will tend to minimize the possibility of premature release.

The initial curvature of the opposed mold members and the center thickness of the lens produced may be used to compute the targeted power of the lens. Herein, the "targeted power" of a lens is the power a lens may have if the lens were to have a curvature and thickness substantially identical to the mold cavity formed by the opposed

mold members. The activating light conditions may be manipulated to alter the power of the lens to be more or less than the targeted power.

By varying the amount of activating light reaching the lens mold the
 5 polymerization rate, and therefore the temperature of the lens forming composition may be controlled. It has been determined that the maximum temperature reached by the lens forming composition during and/or after activation by light may effect the final power of the lens. By allowing the lens forming composition to reach a temperature higher than the typical temperatures described in previous embodiments, but less than the temperature
 10 at which the formed lens will crack, the power of the lens may be decreased. Similarly, controlling the polymerization such that the temperature of the lens forming composition remains substantially below the typical temperatures described in previous embodiments, but at a sufficient temperature such that a properly cured lens is formed, the power of the lens may be increased. Similarly, increasing the temperature of the lens forming
 15 composition during curing may decrease the power of the resulting lens.

In an embodiment, an ophthalmic eyeglass lens may be made from a lens forming composition comprising a monomer and a photoinitiator, by irradiation of the lens forming composition with activating light. The composition may optionally include one
 20 or more of: an ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compound, a polymerization inhibitor, a co-initiator, a hindered amine light stabilizer, and a dye. The activating light may include ultraviolet, actinic, visible or infrared light. The lens forming composition may be treated with activating light such that an eyeglass is formed that has a power substantially equal to the targeted power for a given mold cavity. The peak temperature of the lens forming
 25 process may be the maximum temperature attained after the application of each pulse of activating light. As depicted in Fig. 40, each pulse of activating light may cause the lens forming composition to rise to a peak temperature.

After reaching this peak temperature the lens forming composition may begin to

cool until the next application of activating light. If the peak temperature of the lens forming composition is controlled such that the formed lens has a power substantially equal to the targeted power, the peak temperature is referred to as the "matching temperature". The matching temperature may be determined by performing a series of experiments using the same mold cavity. In these experiments the peak temperature attained during the process is preferably varied. By measuring the power of the lenses obtained through this experiment the matching temperature range may be determined.

When the temperature of the lens forming composition is allowed to rise above the matching temperature during treatment with activating light, the power of the lens may be substantially less than the targeted power of the lens. Alternatively, when the temperature of the lens forming composition is allowed to remain below the matching temperature, the power of the lens may be substantially greater than the targeted power of the lens. In this manner, a variety of lenses having substantially different lens powers from the targeted power may be produced from the same mold cavity.

When the lenses cured by the activating light are removed from the opposed mold members, they are typically under a stressed condition. It has been determined that the power of the lens may be brought to a final resting power, by subjecting the lenses to a post-curing heat treatment to relieve the internal stresses developed during the cure and cause the curvature of the front and the back of the lens to shift. Typically, the lenses may be cured by the activating light in about 10-30 minutes (preferably about 15 minutes). The post-curing heat treatment is preferably conducted at approximately 85-120 °C for approximately 5-15 minutes. Preferably, the post-curing heat treatment is conducted at 100-110 °C for approximately 10 minutes. Prior to the post-cure, the lenses generally have a lower power than the final resting power. The post-curing heat treatment reduces yellowing of the lens and reduces stress in the lens to alter the power thereof to a final resting power.

In an embodiment, an ophthalmic eyeglass lens may be made from a lens forming composition comprising a monomer and a photoinitiator, by irradiation of the lens forming composition with activating light. The composition may optionally include one or more of: an ultraviolet/visible light absorbing compound, a polymerization inhibitor, a co-initiator, a hindered amine light stabilizer, and a dye. The activating light may include ultraviolet, actinic, visible or infrared light. The lens forming composition may be treated with activating light such that an eyeglass is formed. The lens may be kept within the mold cavity formed by the mold members until the light has completely cured the lens forming composition. The minimum time which a lens must remain in the mold cavity to produce a lens with the targeted power, with respect to the mold cavity, is herein referred to as the "demolding time". The demolding time may be determined by performing a series of experiments using the same mold cavity. In these experiments the time that the lens is released from the mold cavity during the process is preferably varied. By measuring the power of the lenses obtained through these experiments the demolding time range may be determined.

When a formed lens is removed prior to the demolding time, the power of the lens may be substantially greater than the targeted power of the lens. By varying the demolding time a variety of lenses having substantially greater lens powers from the targeted power may be produced from the same mold cavity.

3. Postcure With An Oxygen Barrier Enriched With Photoinitiator

In certain applications, all of the lens forming composition may fail to completely cure by exposure to activating light when forming the lens. In particular, a portion of the lens forming composition proximate the gasket often remains in a liquid state following formation of the lens. It is believed that the gaskets may be often somewhat permeable to air, and, as a result, oxygen permeates them and contacts the portions of the lens forming material that are proximate the gasket. Since oxygen tends to inhibit the polymerization

process, portions of the lens forming composition proximate the gasket tend to remain uncured as the lens is formed.

Uncured lens forming composition proximate the gasket may be a problem for several reasons. First, the liquid lens forming composition leaves the edges of the cured lens in a somewhat sticky state, which makes the lenses more difficult to handle. Second, the liquid lens forming composition may be somewhat difficult to completely remove from the surface of the lens. Third, liquid lens forming composition may flow and at least partially coat the surface of lenses when such lenses are removed from the molds.

10 This coating may be difficult to remove and makes application of scratch resistant coatings or tinting dyes more difficult. This coating tends to interfere with the interaction of scratch resistant coatings and tinting dyes with the cured lens surface. Fourth, if droplets of liquid lens forming material form, these droplets may later cure and form a ridge or bump on the surface of the lens, especially if the lens undergoes later postcure or

15 scratch resistant coating processes. As a result of the above problems, often lenses must be tediously cleaned or recast when liquid lens forming composition remains after the lens is formed in an initial cure process.

The problems outlined above may be mitigated if less liquid lens forming composition remains proximate the gasket after the lens is formed. One method of lessening this "wet edge" problem relates to increasing the amount of photoinitiator present in the lens forming composition (i.e., increasing the amount of photoinitiator in the lens forming composition above about 0.15 percent). Doing so, however, tends to create other problems. Specifically, increased photoinitiator levels tend to cause

25 exothermic heat to be released at a relatively high rate during the reaction of the composition. Premature release and/or lens cracking tends to result. Thus it is believed that lower amounts of photoinitiator are preferred.

The wet edge problem has been addressed by a variety of methods described in

U.S. Patent No. 5,529,728 to Buazza et. al. Such methods relate to removing the gasket and applying either an oxygen barrier or a photoinitiator enriched liquid to the exposed edge of the lens. The lens is preferably re-irradiated with sufficient activating light to completely dry the edge of the lens prior to demolding.

5

An embodiment relates to improving the methods described in U.S. Patent No. 5,529,728 to Buazza et. al. This embodiment relates to combining an oxygen barrier with a photoinitiator. Specifically, in one embodiment an oxygen barrier 970 (e.g., a thin strip of polyethylene film or the like as shown in Fig. 12) is preferably embedded or

10 impregnated with a photoinitiator 972. The oxygen barrier is preferably wrapped around the edge of a cured lens which is still encased between two molds (but with the gasket removed). While still "in the mold," the lens is preferably exposed to activating light, thereby drying its edge. An improvement of this method over those previously disclosed is that there may be a significant reduction in the dosage of activating light necessary to
15 bring the lens edge to dryness.

A plastic oxygen barrier film which includes a photoinitiator may be made by: (a) immersing a plastic film in a solution comprising a photoinitiator, (b) removing the plastic film from the solution, and (c) drying the plastic film. The solution may include
20 an etching agent. Preferably a surface of the plastic film is etched prior to or while immersing the plastic film in the solution.

In one example, thin strips (e.g., about 10 mm wide) of high density polyethylene film (approximately 0.013 mm thick) may be soaked in a solution of 97% acetone and
25 3% Irgacure 184 (a photoinitiator commercially available from Ciba Geigy located in Farmingdale, New Jersey) for about five minutes. The polyethylene film may be obtained from Tape Solutions, Inc. (Nashville, Tennessee). In a more preferred embodiment, 0.5% BYK-300 (a flow agent commercially available from BYK Chemie located in Wallingford, Connecticut) may be included in the soaking solution. It is
30 believed that xylene in the BYK-300 tends to etch the surface of the film and make the

film more receptive to absorption of the Irgacure 184. In a still more preferred embodiment, the treated polyethylene strips may be dipped in acetone for about ten seconds to remove excess Irgacure 184. Excess photoinitiator may be seen as a white powder which coats the strips after drying. In either case, the strips are preferably
5 allowed to air dry before applying them to the edge of the lens as described above.

In one alternate embodiment, a plastic eyeglass lens may be made by the following steps: (1) placing a liquid polymerizable lens forming composition in a mold cavity defined by a gasket, a first mold member, and a second mold member; (2)
10 directing first activating light rays toward at least one of the mold members to cure the lens forming composition so that it forms a lens with a back face, edges, and a front face, and wherein a portion of the lens forming composition proximate the edges of the lens is not fully cured; (3) removing the gasket to expose the edges of the lens; (4) applying an oxygen barrier which includes a photoinitiator around the exposed edges of the lens such
15 that at least a portion of the oxygen barrier photoinitiator is proximate lens forming composition that is not fully cured; and (5) directing second activating light rays towards the lens such that at least a portion of the oxygen barrier photoinitiator initiates reaction of lens forming composition while the oxygen barrier substantially prevents oxygen from outside the oxygen barrier from contacting at least a portion of the lens forming
20 composition. The first and second activating light rays may (a) be at the same or different wavelengths and/or intensities, (b) be continuous or pulsed, and (c) be from the same or different light source.

A purpose of the steps 4-5 is to reduce the amount of uncured liquid lens forming
25 composition that is present when the lens is separated from the molds and/or gasket. It has been found that reducing the amount of liquid lens forming composition may be especially advantageous if such reduction occurs before the molds are separated from the cured lens. Separating the molds from the cured lens may cause uncured liquids to at least partially coat the lens faces. This coating may occur when uncured liquid lens

forming composition gets swept over the faces when the molds are separated from the lens. It is believed that curing of the lens tends to create a vacuum between the lens and the mold. Air may sweep over the mold faces to fill this vacuum when the molds are separated from the lens. This air tends to take liquid lens forming composition into the vacuum with it.

In step 4 above, an oxygen barrier which includes a photoinitiator is preferably applied to the edges or sides of the lens after the gasket is removed. Preferably, this oxygen barrier is applied while the lens is still attached to the molds. In an alternate embodiment, this oxygen barrier is preferably applied to the edges or sides of the molds at the same time it is applied to the sides of the lens. In a preferred embodiment, the sides of the lenses are first cleaned or wiped to remove at least a portion of the uncured liquid lens forming composition before the oxygen barrier is applied.

After the oxygen barrier is applied, second activating light rays may be directed towards the lens. After the second activating light rays are directed toward the lens, at least a portion of the liquid lens forming composition that was not cured in the initial cure steps may be cured. It is believed that the photoinitiator embedded in the oxygen barrier facilitates faster and more complete curing of the uncured lens forming composition. As such, less second activating light rays may be employed, thereby lessening the time and energy required in this step. Furthermore, lens quality tends to be enhanced since a lower application of the second activating light rays tends to reduce the potential for lens yellowing.

In a preferred embodiment, substantially all of the remaining liquid lens forming composition is cured after the second activating light rays are directed toward the lens. More preferably, the lens is substantially dry after the second activating light is directed towards the lens.

After the second activating light is directed toward the lens, the lens may then be

demolded. The lens may then be tinted. After the lens is demolded, a scratch resistant coating may be applied to the lens. In one embodiment, a scratch resistant coating is preferably applied to the demolded lens by applying a liquid scratch resistant coating composition to a face of the lens and then applying activating light rays to this face to
5 cure the liquid scratch resistant coating to a solid.

In an embodiment, the activating light for curing the scratch resistant coating is ultraviolet light. The intensity of the activating light applied to the face of the lens to cure the liquid scratch resistant coating composition to a solid is preferably about 150-
10 300 mW/cm² at a wavelength range of about 360-370 nm, and about 50-150 mW/cm² at a wavelength range of about 250-260 nm. The lens may be heated after removal from the molds, or after application of a scratch resistant coating to the lens.

In a preferred embodiment, the above method may further include the additional
15 step of directing third activating light rays towards the lens before the oxygen barrier is applied. These third activating light rays are preferably applied before the gasket is removed. Preferably, the second and third activating light rays are directed toward the back face of the lens (as stated above, the second and third activating light rays are preferably applied while this lens is in the mold cavity). The third activating light rays
20 are preferably about the same range of intensity as the second activating light rays. The same apparatus may be used for both the second and third activating light rays.

In a preferred embodiment, the method described above also includes the step of removing the oxygen barrier from the edges of the lens.
25

The second and third activating light rays may be repeatedly directed towards the lens. For instance, these activating light rays may be applied via a light assembly whereby the lens passes under a light source on a movable stand. The lens may be repeatedly passed under the lights. Repeated exposure of the lens to the activating light

rays may be more beneficial than one prolonged exposure.

Preferably the oxygen barrier includes a film, and more preferably a plastic, flexible, and/or elastic film. In addition, the oxygen barrier is preferably at least partially transparent to activating light so that activating light may penetrate the oxygen barrier to cure any remaining liquid lens forming composition. Preferably, the oxygen barrier is stretchable and self-sealing. These features make the film easier to apply. Preferably, the oxygen barrier is resistant to penetration by liquids, thus keeping any liquid lens forming composition in the mold assembly. Preferably, the oxygen barrier includes a thermoplastic composition. It is anticipated that many different oxygen barriers may be used (e.g., saran wrap, polyethylene, etc.). In one preferred embodiment, the film is "Parafilm M Laboratory Film" which is available from American National Can (Greenwich, CT, U.S.A.). The oxygen barrier may also include aluminum foil.

Preferably, the oxygen barrier is less than about 1.0 mm thick. More preferably, the oxygen barrier is 0.01 to 0.10 mm thick, and more preferably still, the oxygen barrier is less than 0.025 mm thick. If the oxygen barrier is too thick, then it may not be readily stretchable and/or conformable, and it may not allow a sufficient amount of light to pass through it. If the oxygen barrier is too thin, then it may tend to tear.

In an alternate method, a lens may be cured between two mold members. The gasket may be removed and any remaining liquid lens composition may be removed. At this point a mold member may be applied to a substantially solid conductive heat source. Heat may then be conductively applied to a face of the lens by (a) conductively transferring heat to a face of a mold member from the conductive heat source, and (b) conductively transferring heat through such mold member to the face of the lens. The oxygen barrier enriched with photoinitiator may then be applied, and second activating light rays may be directed towards the lens to cure the remaining lens forming composition.

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4. Applying Coating Materials to Lenses

In an embodiment, coating apparatus 20 may be used to apply a pre-coat to a lens before the hardcoat is applied. The pre-coat may serve to increase the "wettability" of the surface to which the hardcoat is to be applied. A surfactant has been conventionally employed for this purpose, however surfactants tend to affect the volatility and flow characteristics of lens coatings in an unfavorable manner. The pre-coat may include acetone and/or BYK-300. Upon even distribution of the hardcoat onto a lens, the coating may be wiped near the edges of the lens to prevent the formation of excessive flakes during curing.

5. Curing by the Application of Pulsed Activating Light

A polymerizable lens forming composition may be placed in a mold/gasket assembly and continuously exposed to appropriate levels of activating light to cure the composition to an optical lens. The progress of the curing reaction may be determined by monitoring the internal temperature of the composition. The lens forming composition may be considered to pass through three stages as it is cured: (1) induction, (2) gel formation & exotherm, and (3) extinction. These stages are illustrated in Fig. 22 for a -.75 -1.00 power lens cured by continuous application of activating light. Fig. 22 shows temperature within the mold cavity as a function of time throughout a continuous radiation curing cycle.

The induction stage occurs at the beginning of the curing cycle and is typically characterized by a substantially steady temperature of the lens forming composition as it is irradiated with activating light (or falling temperature when the curing chamber temperature is below that of the composition). During the induction period, the lens forming composition remains in a liquid state as the photoinitiator breaks down and

consumes inhibitor and dissolved oxygen present in the composition. As the inhibitor content and oxygen content of the composition fall, decomposing photoinitiator and the composition begin to form chains to produce a pourable, "syrup-like" material.

5 As irradiation continues, the "syrup" proceeds to develop into a soft, non-pourable, viscous, gel. A noticeable quantity of heat will begin to be generated during this soft gel stage. The optical quality of the lens may be affected at this point. Should there be any sharp discontinuities in the intensity of the activating light (for example, a drop of composition on the exterior of a mold which focuses light into a portion of the lens forming composition proximate the drop), a local distortion will tend to be created in the gel structure, likely causing an aberration in the final product. The lens forming composition will pass through this very soft gel state and through a firm gel state to become a crystalline structure. When using OMB-91 lens forming composition, a haze tends to form momentarily during the transition between the gel and crystalline stages.

10 As the reaction continues and more double bonds are consumed, the rate of reaction and the rate of heat generated by the reaction will slow, which may cause the internal temperature of the lens forming composition to pass through a maximum at the point where the rate of heat generation exactly matches the heat removal capacity of the system.

15 By the time the maximum temperature has been reached and the lens forming composition begins to cool, the lens will typically have achieved a crystalline form and will tend to crack rather than crumble if it is broken. The rate of conversion will slow dramatically and the lens may begin to cool even though some reaction still may be occurring. Irradiation may still be applied through this extinction phase. Generally, the curing cycle is assumed to be complete when the temperature of the lens forming composition falls to a temperature near its temperature at the beginning of exotherm (i.e., the point where the temperature of the composition increased due to the heat released by the reaction).

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5 The continuous irradiation method tends to work well for relatively low mass lenses (up to about 20-25 grams, see, e.g., U.S. Patents 5,364,256 and 5,415,816). As the amount of material being cured increases, problems may be encountered. The total amount of heat generated during the exothermic phase is substantially proportional to the mass of the lens forming material. During curing of relatively high mass lenses, a greater amount of heat is generated per a given time than during curing of lower mass lenses. The total mold/gasket surface area available for heat transfer (e.g., heat removal from the lens forming composition), however, remains substantially constant. Thus, the internal temperature of a relatively high mass of lens forming material may rise to a higher temperature more rapidly than typically occurs with a lower mass of lens forming material. For example, the internal temperature of a low minus cast-to-finish lens typically will not exceed about 100 °F, whereas certain thicker semi-finished lens "blanks" may attain temperatures greater than about 350 °F when continually exposed to radiation. The lens forming material tends to shrink as curing proceeds and the release of excessive heat during curing tends to reduce the adhesion between the mold and the lens forming material. These factors may lead to persistent problems of premature release and/or cracking during the curing of lens forming material having a relatively high mass.

20 An advantage of the present method is the production of relatively high-mass, semi-finished lens blanks and high power cast-to-finish lenses without the above-mentioned problems of premature release and cracking. The methods described below allow even more control over the process of curing ophthalmic lenses with activating light-initiated polymerization than previous methods. By interrupting or decreasing the activating light at the proper time during the cycle, the rate of heat generation and release may be controlled and the incidence of premature release may be reduced. An embodiment relates to a method of controlling the rate of reaction (and therefore the rate of heat generation) of an activating light-curable, lens forming material by applying selected intermittent doses (e.g., pulses) of radiation followed by selected periods of

decreased activating light or "darkness". It is to be understood that in the description that follows, "darkness" refers to the absence of activating radiation, and not necessarily the absence of visible light.

5 More particularly, an embodiment relates to: (a) an initial exposure period of the lens forming material to radiation (e.g., continuous or pulsed radiation) extending through the induction period, (b) interrupting or decreasing the irradiation before the material reaches a first temperature (e.g., the maximum temperature the composition could reach if irradiation were continued) and allowing the reaction to proceed to a second temperature
10 lower than the first temperature, and (c) applying a sufficient number of alternating periods of exposure and decreased activating light or darkness to the lens forming material to complete the cure while controlling the rate of heat generation and/or dissipation via manipulation of the timing and duration of the radiation, or the cooling in the curing chamber. Fig. 23 shows the temperature within the mold cavity as a function
15 of time for both (a) continuous activating light exposure and (b) pulsed activating light exposure.

In the context of this application, a "gel" occurs when the liquid lens forming composition is cured to the extent that it becomes substantially non-pourable, yet is still
20 substantially deformable and substantially not crystallized.

In the following description, it is to be understood that the term "first period" refers to the length of time of the initial exposure period where radiation (e.g., in pulses) is applied to the lens forming composition, preferably to form at least a portion of the
25 composition into a gel. "First activating" rays or light refers to the radiation applied to the lens forming composition during the initial exposure period. "Second activating" rays or light refers to the radiation that is applied to the lens forming composition (e.g., in pulses) after the composition has been allowed to cool to the "third temperature" mentioned above. "Second period" refers to the duration of time that second activating

rays are directed to the lens forming composition. "Third period" refers to the duration of decreased activating light or darkness that ensues after activating light has been delivered in the second period.

5 In an embodiment, the lens forming material is preferably placed in a mold cavity defined in part between a first mold member and a second mold member. The first mold member and/or second mold member may or may not be continuously cooled as the formation of the lens is completed during the second period and/or third period. One method of removing heat from the lens forming material is to continuously direct air at a non-casting face of at least one of the mold members. It is preferred that air be directed at both the first and second mold members. A cooler may be used to cool the temperature of the air to a temperature below ambient temperature, more preferably between about 0 °C and about 20 °C, and more preferably still between about 3 °C and about 15 °C. Air may also be used to cool at least one of the mold members (in any of the manners described previously) during the first period.

In an embodiment, the first period ends when at least a portion of the lens forming composition begins to increase in temperature or form a gel, and the first activating rays are decreased or removed (e.g., blocked) such that they cease to contact the first or second mold members. It is preferred that the first period be sufficient to allow the lens forming material to gel in the mold cavity such that there is substantially no liquid present (except small amounts proximate the edge of the material). The interruption of irradiation prior to complete gellation may in some circumstances produce optical distortions. It is preferred that the length of the first period be selected to inhibit the lens forming composition from reaching a first temperature. The first temperature is preferably the maximum temperature that the lens forming composition could reach if it was irradiated under the system conditions (e.g., flow rate and temperature of any cooling air, wavelength and intensity of radiation) until the "exothermic potential" (i.e., ability to evolve heat through reaction) of the composition was exhausted.

According to an embodiment, the reactions within the composition are preferably allowed to proceed after the first activating rays are removed until the composition reaches a second temperature. The second temperature is preferably less than the first temperature. The first temperature is preferably never reached by the composition. Thus, the composition is preferably prevented from achieving the first temperature and then cooling to the second temperature. The composition is preferably allowed to cool from the second temperature to the third temperature. This cooling may occur "inactively" by allowing heat to transfer to the ambient surroundings, or at least one of the mold members may be cooled by any of the methods described above.

In an embodiment, the curing of the lens forming material may be completed by directing second activating rays (e.g., in pulses) toward at least one of the mold members. The second activating rays may be directed toward the mold member(s) for a second period that may be determined according to the rate of reaction of the lens forming composition. The change in temperature of the composition or a portion of the mold cavity, or the air in or exiting the chamber may be an indicator of the rate of reaction, and the second period may be determined accordingly. The second period may be varied such that subsequent pulses have a longer or shorter duration than previous pulses. The time between pulses (i.e., the third period) may also be varied as a function of the temperature and/or reaction rate of the composition. To achieve a light pulse, (a) the power to a light source may be turned on and then off, (b) a device may be used to alternately transmit and then block the passage of light to the lens forming composition, or (c) the light source and/or mold assembly may be moved to inhibit activating light from contacting the lens forming material. The second and/or third periods are preferably controlled to allow rapid formation of a lens while reducing the incidence of (a) premature release of the lens from the first and/or second mold member and/or (b) cracking of the lens.

In an embodiment, the second period is preferably controlled to inhibit the temperature of the composition from exceeding the second temperature. The temperature of the lens forming composition may continue to increase after radiation is removed from the first and/or second mold members due to the exothermic nature of reactions occurring within the composition. The second period may be sufficiently brief such that the pulse of second activating rays is removed while the temperature of the composition is below the second temperature, and the temperature of the composition increases during the third period to become substantially equal to the second temperature at the point that the temperature of the composition begins to decrease.

In an embodiment, the third period extends until the temperature of the composition becomes substantially equal to the third temperature. Once the temperature of the composition decreases to the third temperature, a pulse of second activating rays may be delivered to the composition. In an embodiment, the second period remains constant, and the third period is preferably controlled to maintain the temperature of the composition below the second temperature. The third period may be used to lower the temperature of the composition to a temperature that is expected to cause the composition to reach but not exceed the second temperature after a pulse is delivered to the composition.

In an embodiment, a shutter system may be used to control the application of first and/or second activating rays to the lens forming material. The shutter system preferably includes air-actuated shutter plates that may be inserted into the curing chamber to prevent activating light from reaching the lens forming material. Alternatively, the shutter system may include an LCD panel. Controller 50 may receive signals from thermocouple(s) located inside the lens-curing chamber, proximate at least a portion the mold cavity, or located to sense the temperature of air in or exiting the chamber, allowing the time intervals in which the shutters are inserted and/or extracted to